

وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ صَلَوةُ الرَّحْمَنِ

THE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE

Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim

INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC CULTURE
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Dr. Khalifah Abdul Hakim had long cherished a desire to write an account of the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam. He intended to base it on original and authentic sources, but wanted to present the subject in a manner which would make it easily intelligible to the West-oriented minds. Having collected his material, he devoted the last years of his life to this project, and had completed the book- except for a preface and, possibly, a concluding chapter rounding up the discussion- when he suddenly died in January 1959.

This book is thus a posthumous publication. It would have gained immensely by the author's final look at the manuscript, but as the reader will notice, it is a complete, well-ordered whole and represents the author at his maturest.

In the part dealing with the life of the Prophet, Khalifah Sahib provides an illuminating background to the Prophet's message to the world. The Qur'an describes the Prophet's advent as a "Mercy to the Worlds," and "this appears," says Justice S.A. Rahman in his Foreword, "to be the keynote of the author's clear and cogent exposition of the Prophet's teachings....The work bears the imprint of his profound learning, comprehending both Eastern and Western sciences of higher knowledge and experience." In the second part dealing with the Prophet's Message, "the rationale of all the major Islamic tenets is brought out in a lucid discussion, at a high philosophic level, in consonance with the dynamic and progressive spirit of Islam."

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَنْهَاكُمْ
بِرَبِّ الْجَنَّاتِ

**THE PROPHET
AND
HIS MESSAGE**

علیہ وَبَرَکَاتُهُ
صلی اللہ علیہ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّمَ

THE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE

Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim

INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC CULTURE
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FOREWORD

The number of biographers of the Prophet of Islam must be legion. They belong to all times and climes, since his advent. As is natural, however, the quality of their work varies with their method of approach. There are among them those whose piety, devotion to and love for the Prophet impel them to the role of uncritical recorders of all reports, handed down to us by early chroniclers. Others, blinded by religious bigotry or ingrained prejudice, have been motivated by the partisan desire to belittle the personality of the Prophet and his historical stature and, consequently, they have subjected his life and work to malicious carping criticism. They have not scrupled to twist facts to suit their ignoble purpose. Some Western scholars have tried to be objective in their approach within the limitations, consciously or unconsciously imposed by their own cultural and religious heritage whose nuances are easily traceable in their writings. Muslim scholars have, from time to time, compiled biographies of the Prophet, to counter the uninformed, misinformed or deliberately distorted propagandist versions, given currency by hostile critics, and the corpus of literature on the subject has grown to enormous proportions.

The fascinating subject of these diverse studies, however, continues to attract the attention of scholars to the present day, and this fact should cause no surprise to the intelligent student of human affairs. The Prophet's influence on the course of human history has been both profound and far-reaching. The Muslims claim him to be the last link in the golden chain of prophetic consciousness in man, and this concept of the finality of his mission is fraught with the highest significance for the intellectual and spiritual development of the human ego. On this point, the

observations of the late 'Allāmah Muhammad Iqbāl, in his lecture on "The Spirit of Muslim Culture," appear to be very apt. He says :

... the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world ; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. . . . In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings ; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Quran and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality. The idea, however, does not mean that mystic experience, which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet, has now ceased to exist as a vital fact. . . . The function of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience.*

This is a unique revolutionary concept which has the authority of the Prophet himself behind it. Coupled with the socio-economic-cum-political revolution spelt out in the Prophet's message, almost fourteen hundred years ago, it more than justifies the engrossment of scholars with his life and times, in every age.

The present work, entitled *The Prophet and His Message*, is from the facile pen of the late Dr Khalīfah 'Abdul Hakīm, the Founder-Director of the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore. The manuscript was found among his papers, on his untimely death, and it is a matter for regret that it has to be published posthumously, without the benefit of final revision by the author himself. The material lay scattered in parts which required co-ordination, rearrangement and revision. The task of another scholar assigned such an essential function becomes doubly difficult in the absence of guidance from the original author. However,

* *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1944, pp. 126-7.

this delicate task has been painstakingly performed for about the first one hundred pages of the book by Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan and for the rest of the book by Mr M. Ashraf Darr in consultation with him and under his supervision and that of Dr S.M. Ikram. The result, within the intrinsic limitations of such a venture, will, it is hoped, be found to be satisfactory.

The approach of Dr Khalīfah 'Abdul Ḥakīm to his subject is eminently rational and he has presented the essential facts of the Prophet's life, ascertainable from authentic histories or Traditions, supported by intrinsic evidence from the text of the Qur'ān whose pristine purity has been admittedly preserved intact, through the vicissitudes of time and place. The biographical section of the book, however, seems to serve more or less as the illuminating background for the Prophet's message to mankind. The Qur'ān describes the Prophet's advent as a mercy to the worlds. This appears to be the keynote of the author's clear and cogent exposition, in an idiom and style that the modern mind can appreciate, of the Prophet's teachings, covering the major part of the book. The work bears the impress of his profound learning, comprehending both Eastern and Western sources of higher knowledge and experience. The rationale of all the major Islamic tenets is brought out in a lucid discussion, at a high philosophic level, in consonance with the dynamic and progressive spirit of Islam. It is possible that the orthodox school of thought might cavil at some of the opinions expressed herein, but they remain well-considered views in the best tradition of original thinking in the history of the Islamic intellectual movement and, therefore, despite all differences in outlook and understanding, entitled to respect.

• (Justice) S. A. Rahman

Lahore
16 March 1972

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

LIKE many other species of animals man is by nature gregarious; for the necessities of even very primitive existence he has to enter into some sort of reciprocal relations with other members of his species. It is not only action and reaction upon his natural environment but dealings with other human beings that raise his consciousness to levels not reached by other animals. The natural biological unit consists of the parents and the offspring; the preservation of this unit is guaranteed by instinct. At this stage man still lives at the common animal level, and is not easily distinguishable from higher animals like the monkeys. Morality, as human beings at the higher stages of development understand it, emerges where the desires of the individual begin to clash with the desires of other individuals and run counter to the demands of corporate social existence and well-being. Where this conflict does not exist there is yet no morality, even though the social organisation may be inviolably perfect as among the ants and the bees whose totalitarian organisation runs smoothly in the interests of the whole; natural instruction, regimentation and unconscious compulsion leave no room for individual desires inconsonant with the welfare of the group. Morality emerges only with individuality and free-will. An action, however valuable biologically or socially, carried out under the compulsion of instinct or because of external group pressure, is not a moral action; whatever value it may possess is an amoral value.

The definition of man as a social animal does not fully describe his nature; at the foundation of human life, there is a contradiction. To describe him completely, man should be called an unsocial-social animal. With respect to the other members of his group he is on the offensive or the defensive, and the identification of interests is never complete. There is always a stress and strain between man's egoism and altruism. The eternal question of human relations is how to restrain the egoism of the individual or, within the life of the individual, how to restrain the imperviousness of any one instinct and prevent its domination over the other natural or rational urges of life, because any one instinct left to itself may run amuck, suppressing and crushing all other instincts. To put it briefly, the problem of human life is the harmonisation of the apparently disharmonious. At the natural biological level also, life is a constant effort of adaptation to environment. Civilised man's environment is much more extensive than the physical forces around him. He has to adapt himself to the demands of his group; these demands may be customary, institutional, mythical or ideational. When the individual has not yet emerged as a thinking being desirous of regulating his personal life according to his own ideas and sentiments, all life is regulated by custom; but custom is not yet morality in the true sense. At a higher stage custom is elevated and codified into laws, and the demands of corporate existence are met by legality; rights and duties are established with threats and sanctions against violation. But legality too cannot be identified with morality; first, because it comprehends only a part of human relations and, secondly, because of the element of compulsion in it—it rests on a *must* and not on an *ought*. A man may punctiliously observe what the laws demand and may still be a person devoid of moral sentiment or consideration. The truth that mere legality is not identical with morality is further substantiated by the established fact that

laws throughout a long period of human history were made by groups or classes mainly to fortify their own vested interests. Not only the laws, but the ethics that was supposed to be their basis was little more than group morality. When tribes are welded into nations, the spirit of laws and ethics remains very much the same, although in a rational or humanistic garb.

Bergson in his book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* has rightly endorsed this conclusion and propounded the thesis that in human history morality inculcated by groups and communities, classes, castes and nations has always been a tribal morality, and the only exception is the morality of saints and prophets. He identifies his *elan vital*, the Evolutionary Creative Life Urge, with Love which is realised in the intuitive life and conduct of the great saints and prophets who transcended the narrowness of tribal morality. Human morality has developed both by gradual extension of justice, love and sympathy to cover, not only all humanity, but all living beings, comprehending even the entire organic realm. The feeling of Love has sometimes overflowed even these boundaries in all great cultures and, in some saints and mystic poets, has embraced the whole of existence. Among Western poets Wordsworth is an eminent example of this approach, and there is an abundance of it in the Sūfi poets of Islām. Says Mīr Dard, the mystic poet of Delhi, "Step softly on the stones in the hills; each one of them is a store-house of hearts (souls), delicate like glassware." Ghālib, another great poet of Delhi, inculcates similar sentiments about the universe in some of his verses:

The sun and the dust-atoms that dance in its rays are all hearts; the Cosmos is a glass-house of souls.

Every atom is intoxicated with the wine of the wonders of life; it is like the eye of a lover reflecting the enchanting beauty of the beloved's bewitching eyes.

The Qur'ān has taught the Muslims that the Universe

is essentially spiritual and alive, singing praises of the Creator in its own tongue and manner which ordinary mortals do not understand:

The seven heavens and the earth, and whosoever is in them, glorify Him; there is nothing that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand this glorification (xvii. 44).

Thus, too, says the great mystic poet Rūmī, whose *magnum opus*, the *Mathnawī*, is considered to be a Persian version of the essential meaning of the Qur'ān:

Earth and water, air and fire, are alive: and are servants of the great Nourisher and Sustainer of Existence, although man in his ignorance considers them to be dead matter.

I have quoted a few of these verses in support of the thesis of Bergson that Cosmic Life and Love are best reflected in the sentiments, life and conduct of the great prophets and saints. Their morality, rooted in spirituality and divinised by contact with the Cosmic Creative Urge (which the Qur'ān designates as *Rabb*), is broad and universal and transcends group morality which is commonly the morality of nations and classes and sects.

To whom does humanity owe the moral elevation and transcendence of individual or collective egoism? Not to those who were merely great lawgivers, because legality does not touch the deeper founts of the human soul and is, ultimately, an attempt to save individuals from the tyranny of one another's egoism. Not to the great philosophers who, by the instruments of logic and dialectic, tried like Socrates and Plato to convince humanity that morality is not subjective but objective, not relative but absolute, rooted in the nature of rational reality. Philosophical ethics in the West begins with Socrates and Plato. There is much that is edifying and satisfying to the intellect in their arguments for the cosmic validity of "the good" but, taken as a whole, they do not make the chords of the human heart vibrate. Plato's *Republic*, in which Socrates is the

chief exponent and promulgator of an idealistic scheme of ethics and politics, draws up only the pattern of a caste system in which a eugenically selected minority is privileged to be the custodian of wisdom and morality and the large majority of citizens and slaves are prohibited from thinking for themselves and guiding their own lives. *The Republic* denies the essential equality of human beings—equality before law and equality of opportunity to develop one's endowments and potentialities. It is fortunate for humanity that this "pattern in heaven" was not realised on this earth. Morality really is less of a theory and more of a way of life; therefore, example is here more effective than precept. The life of the philosophical moralist, or of the writer of ethics, is seldom an example for others. It is only great personalities, their conduct and their life attitudes, from which edifying influences radiate and the lives of others receive fresh ideals and energies. It is men like Buddha, Jesus and Muḥammad who are regenerative and creative moral influences.

It is not due to any historical accident that these great souls continue to receive homage from a large portion of humanity. The philosopher and the scientist, the rich and the poor, the peasant and the ordinary wage-earner continue even after millenniums to hold them as ideals, and measure their own conduct by the standards set by them in precept and example.

Who can deny the historical fact that of all these great teachers the life of Muḥammad is the richest in the multiplicity and variety of human experience? What we know about Buddha with any certainty is only this that, overwhelmed by the pain and misery of life, he wandered away from his princely realm, deserting his community, his wife and child, in search of light to solve the problem of cosmic pain. The light that he received showed him the unreality of all life. Life, according to him, could not be mended; the only remedy, therefore, is that it must be ended. Actions, good as well as bad, are the products of desire.

Therefore, to end all actions and ultimately all life, all desires should be annihilated; the aim of life should be to negate itself to attain to a desireless state, *Nirvāṇā*, to which no category of life or consciousness is applicable, for which reason it is indescribable. Such a metaphysics could lead only to a limited kind of negative morality: not to tell lies, not to injure any living being, not to be selfish, not to be harsh, but to feel mercy for the unhappiness of all life, not to mix with others on the ordinary social plane, but to prefer the life of the monk who lives on the charity of the wage-earner or the rich, and to engage in no occupations that constitute the sum total of human civilisation and culture. The beneficial influence of Buddha on some aspects of the life of those who revere and follow him lies in the fact that even some portions of negative morality form a necessary part of ethics, although they could be effectively useful only in their application to the practical affairs of life. One can very well value the philosophy and life attitude of "non-attachment," if it is a non-attachment of the kind preached by Krishna as related in the *Muḥābhārtā*, namely, that a person must remain detached from egotistic ambitions and desires while doing his duty—even while fighting a battle for a righteous cause. Duties emerge only in the complexities of human relations and predicaments. This *Karmā Joga*, as presented by Krishna in the *Bhagvat Gītā*, comes very close to the positive ethics of Islam.

The moral and spiritual influence of Jesus has been much wider and deeper. Being the last of the great Israelite prophets, he represents the spiritual inheritance of a long line. Christian dogmatics and theology have set him apart from the other great prophets and have lifted him from humanity into divinity. Not being satisfied with his divinised humanity, it made him "God-Man" instead of "Man of God". The concept of incarnation, against which every great prophet of Israel would have fought tooth and nail, stigmatising it as a most unforgivable blasphemy, was imported from the

Aryan religions where it still is a central doctrine. Besides, some Mediterranean dogmas and mysteries were grafted on the simple monotheistic creed of Jesus. Identifying him with God Almighty Himself did no service either to God or to man. To this deification of Jesus the doctrine of Original Sin was tacked, in order to convince humanity of its inherent depravity, for which the sole remedy was not a pious and virtuous life, but belief in the vicarious suffering and sacrifice of "God's only begotten son" expiating the inheritable sin of humanity's first progenitors. Every great prophet suffers for the sake of humanity and is truly a saviour, but Jesus was made the Son and Saviour. The simple and sweet religion of Jesus was thus beclouded by irrational mysteries, sapping the very foundations of morality by depriving man of free-will, and making God a cruel, revengeful tyrant, visiting the sin of the first parents on innumerable generations — a God implacable without human sacrifice of a nature found in pagan creeds. According to this kind of dogmatism, moral effort loses its value and assurance of well-being, here and hereafter. This belief in Original Sin and vicarious sacrifice was made the indispensable condition of salvation. More pagan mysteries were incorporated in the religion of love propagated by Jesus. In the Greek mystery religions a god incarnate in a lamb had to be eaten in a solemn sacrament so that his divinity might be imbibed by direct physical assimilation. Dogma and sacrament replaced moral effort. If real Christianity were no more than a belief in Incarnation, Original Sin, Vicarious Divine Suffering and in the efficacy of pagan sacraments and mysteries, it would have perished and would have been relegated to the limbo of discarded pagan creeds and mythologies. But the real triumph of Jesus and his valuable contribution to the uplift of humanity are attributable not to these mysterious dogmas but to his preaching and practising the love of God and Man, exposing the superficialities and hypocrisies of the rigid legalists.

and worshippers of the letter of law. For him a pure heart full of love is the essence of all true religion. When religion has degenerated into spiritless external observances, a man like Jesus finds himself called upon to proclaim to the world that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath ; the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life. He found that Judaism which, from Abraham downwards, had produced great prophets, had degenerated into a religion of ritual and ceremonies, external observances and legalism, from which the spirit had departed. He confined his teaching to this vital mission and left aside the whole political, economic and cultural life of the Jews, in the belief that if hearts were changed for the better and religious outlook was genuinely spiritualised, laws and customs and the various institutions of civilisation would get a new meaning. When universal love ruled the world it would be transformed into a Kingdom of Heaven. The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would make them politically dominant and powerful, but when they found this claimant of Messiahhood proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven was within one's own soul, they were disappointed and considered him to be a charlatan and an impostor, who was incapable of delivering the goods. They wanted to get rid of Caesars, but here was a man who said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." If he had stirred up a political revolution the Romans might have crucified him, but not the Jews who would have welcomed such a revolt with a sporting chance of success. He invited the Jews to a spiritual revolution, promising to them that if they first sought the Kingdom of Heaven in the inner recesses of their own souls everything else would certainly be added unto it. This phenomenon has happened in the history of all great religions. Every religion has of necessity to have an institutional side. Some ritual of worship and some laws and regulations are necessary for the purposes of organisation. These things

are the external shell to protect the kernel of morality and religion. But with the passage of time the followers of a religion begin to identify religion with verbal assent to rigidly formulated dogmas and certain external observances and ceremonies. A person is considered to be religious if he gives this assent and observes some ritual, irrespective of the fact whether he is moved by love or justice in his dealings with his fellow-men. Such was the case of the professionally religious people whom Jesus called venomous and blood-sucking vipers. During the lifetime of Jesus, his cry proved to be a cry in the wilderness. Neither the elite nor the common people understood him. The crowds that began to gather wherever he went believed him primarily to be a faith-healer, possessing powers of the kind that our present-day Christian Scientists claim to be potentially present in every human being. The few disciples who attached themselves to him were poor and ignorant people. For the most part they were men of weak and superstitious faith, and of wavering and dubious loyalty, one of them betraying Jesus for a few coins. According to the Gospel, they could not keep themselves awake during the night when their Master felt the approach of death. It is said that these disciples got utterly dismayed, their hopes having been shattered by the Master's crucifixion which the Jews believed to be an ignominious end of the cursed. Their faith revived only when he was seen alive by some on the third day after his crucifixion.

Whatever may be the nature of his death and resurrection, the ministry of Jesus lasted for a very short time. He had neither time nor opportunity to grapple with the manifold moral and cultural problems of his nation. He preached the reality of the spirit and disappeared into the realm of the spirit. Humanity was left to itself to find out by a long process of trial and error the rights and duties of man in the various spheres of life. Muhammad has been called by the writer in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* as the most

successful of all the prophets. From among the numerous prophets Carlyle chose Muhammad as the best representative of his class because, as he says, he stood up heroically against terrible odds, and ultimately overcame all obstacles and brutal opposition. He left the world after having fulfilled his mission. Over against him the shortlived and abjectly terminated mission of Jesus apparently lacked all sign of success. But one would not call Jesus on that score an unsuccessful man who created just a ripple in the stream of his nation's life and disappeared like many another preacher. The high and broad principles of spiritualised morality that he inculcated are a leaven that would perpetually inform, purify and exalt human hearts and ameliorate human life in all its various spheres. Had he been vouchsafed the opportunity to apply these principles to some of the vital institutions of civilisation he could have shown humanity a better way of remoulding them to the approximation of the Kingdom of Heaven for whose advent he had worked and prayed. But destiny had left the accomplishment of this practical task to another great prophet who would demonstrate in every sphere of life how the synthesis of law and love can improve all institutions and human relations. Was not Jesus uttering a prophecy about Muhammad when he said in very clear words:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16: 7).

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come (John 16: 12-13).

Jesus's inculcation of love, mercy and peace is identical with the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam, but the difference lies in its practical

application to the actual problems of human existence.

Real and living love is not passive and negative sentimentality. Love must be creative and positive; it is a light that should lead towards a better life. Religions have suffered from two extremes: they either become mere dogmatism, legalism and ritualism; or, emphasising the spirit only, they begin to recommend flight from the practical realities of life and tend thereby to become life-negating and ascetic. The religion of Jesus suffered from this latter calamity. As Jesus was not a married man, his followers, who took him for a model, began to consider marriage as a concession to the lower, unregenerate animal nature of man. Jesus had said nothing against marriage, but St Paul lowered it in the eyes of the Christians by saying that it was "better to marry than to burn". In the early centuries after Jesus, members of the Church did marry, and some had even concubines, but it was considered to be a compromise with the flesh whose avoidance would surely raise a man spiritually. Jesus was not an ascetic but, because he had no opportunity to deal with the practical affairs of life, his followers gave an ascetic bent to his creed. This asceticism continued to develop among the religious enthusiasts and saints in Christian society sometimes to very irrational and perverse extremes. The world and the flesh were identified with the devil and were considered as essentially antagonistic to the spirit.

The history of Hinduism and Buddhism repeated almost identical traits. Hindu philosophy and religion had declared the world of time and space and matter to be unreal illusion. The question of the purpose of life did not arise because only what is real could have a purpose. Life is a product of cosmic illusion which should be dispelled by knowledge of its unreality, so that the cycles of births and deaths could be ended. Every birth is a kind of punishment for the sins committed in an earlier life; but even virtuous life is of

no avail because the universal and impersonal law of Karma must produce the results of all good and bad actions. So that the process of rebirth shall not cease, and one would not be rid of life which necessarily entails ignorance and pain. Buddhism repudiated the Hindu caste system and considered the tormenting of the flesh for purposes of spiritual purification as useless and harmful; but with respect to the unreality of all life and the necessity of getting rid of it by true knowledge, its metaphysics was almost the same as that of Vedanta. Although Christian metaphysics was not identical with Hindu and Buddhistic philosophy, yet in actual practice Christian asceticism and monasticism did not differ from the ascetic attitude of the Hindu and the Buddhist. Life negating asceticism is a *reductio ad absurdum* of that view of life which dichotomises existence into spirit and flesh, or God and the world alienated from Him. If the world and the flesh are the enemies of the spirit, then, to save one's soul, one should have no truck with them.

This view of life was dominant in the greater part of the then civilised world and all great religions which may be called spiritual had adopted this view; spirituality everywhere was identified with negation of life and repudiation of the world. Nietzsche, whom one would not like to quote about spiritual matters, uttered, however, a great truth when he said that religions could be classified as those that affirm and those that deny the reality of life and the world. His criticism of Christianity as a life-negating force, although exaggerated and partial, is levelled against the dogmatic and ascetic tendencies that developed so early in the religion of Jesus. No objective and clear-sighted scholar of the history of religion would deny the fact that, during the sixth century of the Christian era, that is to say, at the time of the advent of Islam, religion almost everywhere had become identified with the negation of life and the world. Many Western Christian writers go on repeating the ill-founded

opinion that there was nothing original in Islam. If the Qur'an was only repeating over again what the Jewish and Christian Scriptures had taught or what the Zoroastrians and the Brahmins and the Buddhists already knew and believed, why was the whole world of established religion so bitterly antagonistic to it? The impression of lack of originality, if not based on sheer ignorance and prejudice, arises occasionally from the fact that the Qur'an itself—although in a very different sense from the one it is made to serve—claimed no originality. The Book does not address the followers of other great religions, saying: "Hear, ye people, a new view of life revealed only to this prophet, which you or your ancestors had never heard." It proclaims itself to be a reminder and reviver of eternal truths contained in former Scriptures, but either forgotten or perverted by their misguided and benighted followers. Neither did Islam claim to be a religion taught for the first time by Muhammad. The Qur'an says that this has been the creed of all the inspired prophets. Laws and rituals have been a variable element suiting the times and circumstances, but the basic truth of belief in an omnipotent and good God along with inculcation of basic morality has been a constant element wherever a true religion has been taught. God has been raising His prophets and messengers in every nation. The originality of Islam lies in the fact that it taught the world what the world had forgotten or perverted. Islam gathered the half-truths of the followers of different creeds and made them whole by supplying what had been dropped. It removed the veils of mythologies, superstitions and mysteries that had covered simple rational and natural truths. It reminded humanity that there is only one omnipotent, just and merciful Creator and Sustainer, and all the rest are His creation and creatures bound to obey Him by choice or by inherent nature. It taught humanity that this world is real and rational and not a place of perversion and punishment. It taught that all nature

is God-created, and existence is not divided between the Realms of Darkness and Light with God and the angels ruling in one and the devils creating or dominating the other. It taught humanity that the essentials of religion consist mainly of pure morality; mere beliefs and dogmas, and worship and sacraments, are of no avail if a person is not just and merciful.

In the realm of morals and spiritual life if one means by originality an idea or an utterance not found previously in any creed or philosophy, or never before inculcated by any moral and spiritual leader, then surely you cannot find it anywhere. Neither Abraham nor Moses nor Jesus nor Buddha nor Muhammad said anything that you could not find either in the religious tradition in which they were born or in creeds and philosophies in other times and places. Spiritual life is like a living organism which derives all its constituent elements from environment and heredity, but transforms them into its own distinctive and unique life by a mysterious and miraculous bio-chemistry. Many of the great moral teachers often make a direct reference to others, and even if they don't, one can relate their ideas to something that has gone before. Goethe said that if you tried to understand him by analysis, then you might find out and calculate all the food that had gone into him, so much milk and vegetables, and so many cattle and sheep and pigs, and so much air and water, and organic and inorganic material. The same is the case with the intellectual and moral outlook of man; you may analyse it into its elements but you can never explain away the distinctive outlook of the individual.

Great religious geniuses—geniuses in the other realms of life—are distinctive and unique personalities; none of them duplicates another, though there may be a general resemblance. Sunil Malhotra

as well as the unseen, nor in reminding human beings of the essential unity and solidarity of mankind, nor in saying that basic morality is ingrained in unspoilt human nature, nor in making prayer the chief medium of communication between the helpless finite and the omnipresent and omniscient infinite. Those critics who say that there is nothing original in Islam are really repeating the saying that there is nothing new under the sun. This is true in a way but the other side of the picture is that history or Nature never repeats itself exactly and that every phenomenon is a unique phenomenon which never occurred before and shall never occur again in exactly the same manner. This is true of life much more than of matter where there is an apparent repetition. The higher the life, the more unique and original it is. Life everywhere is a creative synthesis.

The distinctiveness of Islam which made it a dynamic forward movement, creative of new values, lies in this that it reconciled the apparent opposites of various creeds and ideologies, transcending everywhere the thesis and the antithesis and transforming them into a higher synthesis, retaining the values of both. There is a saying of Jesus having universal import: Let not man cut asunder what God has joined. Christianity made a limited and, I believe, a wrong application of it to prove the inadmissibility of divorce under any circumstances, because in marriage as a sacrament, the couple were joined by God. The Qur'an also repeated this pregnant utterance without narrowing down or misinterpreting it. It derived the unity of all existence from the unity of a single universal Creator. Hindu metaphysics sundered the universe from God by declaring the former as a realm of ignorance and illusion for which the transcendent Divine Reality could not be held responsible. Zoroastrianism made existence an eternal battleground of Light and Darkness, God and the Devil, so that everything in existence, plants and animals, bad men and the destructive forces of Nature

that were considered to be injurious were the creation of Ahriman, Evil personified. Greek philosophy too could not successfully surmount this dualism and declared the realm of matter and change to be unreal. Christian theology, influenced by these extraneous ideologies, went the same way and started the dualism of the spirit and the flesh, which resulted in a life-negating ascetic outlook. Violent and cruel attempts were made to mortify the flesh, the enemy of the spirit. The physical and mental mortification of some of the Christian saints makes gruesome reading. To seek God you had to renounce the world and enter a cave or a monastery, where life was a perpetual round of self-mortification, ritual and prayer. Human society, which ought to be an indivisible whole, was split up into priesthood and laity, the priest cut off from life and the layman only superficially and secondarily connected with religion. A Roman Christian is reported to have characterised the associates of Muhammad as a curious lot: "Cavaliers in the day and monks in the night." Ascetic creeds had sundered even man and woman by declaring all sex relations, even within lawful wedlock, as unspiritual, and to be tolerated only in the unregenerate.

Islam recombined all that these creeds and philosophies had sundered and, on that very account, was stigmatised as a sensuous and materialistic creed. Comprehending life in all its variety and diversity, and a constant attempt to harmonise multiplicity into a consistent unity, is the distinguishing feature of Islam. Greek philosophy in the teaching of Aristotle, Socrates and Plato had made that attempt intellectually, but it proved abortive, because rigidly separated castes, as we find in Plato's *Republic*, could create no harmonisation of individuals and classes by that unnaturally forced pattern. Hinduism practised this caste system on a gigantic scale for two millenniums and more with extremely inhuman and pernicious results, culminating in innumerable types of segregations,

which engendered the vicious custom of untouchability, degrading millions of human beings below the level of animals; you may touch a cat or a dog and remain religiously pure but the touch of the pariah would require a ceremony of purification by using the excreta of the cow. Hindu civilisation sagged from within; it disintegrated into countless creeds and castes in its vile attempt to sunder what God had joined. In the Christian West the Church and the State stood against each other as two rival powers and a good deal of European history revolves round this rivalry; the struggle is not yet over, though the Church as a powerful organisation is fighting a losing battle.

The comprehensiveness of Islam and its attempted harmonisation of the various spheres of life under an all-embracing ideal was embodied in the life of the Prophet. We do not find any founder of a great religion whose life embraces even one-tenth of Muhammad's richness of experience and practical guidance. The Hebrews produced great prophets from Moses to Jesus. Moses delivered his community from the abject thralldom of the Egyptians, and gave them laws and a ritual, but died before their wanderings in the desert had come to an end. The other prophets of Israel arose at intervals to warn them of Divine punishment for their iniquities and violations of the Covenant with Jehovah; but their cry was a cry in the wilderness, their people would pay no heed to them; some of them were persecuted and some were killed. Their lofty ideas, their moral struggle, their exhortations, their sense of Divine justice, their fears and their hopes have given the world a soul-stirring literature, but none of them could serve as a comprehensive guide in the practical affairs of life. None of them could be considered to have been successful, if we mean by success the triumph of a cause and the actualisation of ideals in the remoulding of the life of the nation. Jesus too gave his people great truths and spiritual attitudes, but left the laws and institutions entirely intact—only with one or two

exceptions. He said in clear words that he had come not to destroy laws but to fulfil them, meaning thereby that if the spirit of the law be disregarded its external observance is of little or no value. If Jesus had attempted practical transformation of the life of his people he would have been obliged to change a good deal of Mosaic Law and the innumerable accretions that had become an indispensable part of it. The Jews had become victims of a cruel and cumbersome legalism, but Jesus did not touch it, declaring instead that whoever changed or violated a jot or tittle of it must go to hell. Jesus wanted only to fulfil it in spirit and not to change it; but St Paul later on went further and said that the Law had been transcended by Love. The attitude of St Paul seems to be like that of a modern writer who said, "Let me make a nation's songs, and I don't care who makes its laws," meaning thereby that good songs must nourish fine emotions which will be embodied in good laws. The sincere follower of every great prophet holds his spiritual guide as an exemplar, desires to imitate him and seeks his guidance in the struggles and conflicts of life. But if he has received from his exemplar only broad moral and spiritual ideas, and their application to the various spheres of life is left to his own individual judgment, there is greater possibility that his judgment will be twisted by personal interests and prejudices. Vicious, cruel and egotistic individuals work havoc with principles when their interpretation as well as application is left to them. Take, for instance, the beautiful teaching of Jesus that the essence of spirituality is non-violence and love to the extent that even enemies are to be loved. Then look at the religious wars and persecutions of Christians by Christians. There have been cruel fanatics in the history of every religion, but persecution and torture in the name of religion practised with all conviction and sincerity is unparalleled in the history of intolerance and fanaticism. Excruciating tortures were invented by the Inquisition in Spain,

Italy and elsewhere. This is sufficient to establish the fact that broad moral and spiritual principles are never sufficient to reform humanity. Some great souls have to put them in practice and tell humanity by example and practical demonstration in what manner ideals are to be implemented in actual life situations.

If Muhammad was more successful than any other prophet, and is a better exemplar than any other spiritual guide, it is not only because he presented exalted ideas and beautiful ideals but because he put them into practical form and demonstrated their utility in all spheres of life. It is a distinguishing feature of the life of Muhammad that there is nothing that he preached and demanded from others which he did not practise himself. It was the perfect concord of word and deed that was the source of his spiritual power and moral influence. His life is so rich in practical demonstration that there is hardly any problem that arises in the lives of individuals and nations on which the guidance of the Prophet is not available. Starting life as a poor orphan, he lived through so many phases of life that he has an unexampled biography. Among the founders of great world religions, he is the only one who stands in the broad limelight of history. His was an open life, exposed to public view day and night; neither in his teaching nor in his conduct had he any secrets. He exhorted people to go and broadcast to everyone what they saw him doing or saying. No biography of any great man can offer such richness of details reported by hundreds of his contemporaries to the generation that followed. This transmission continued orally for more than a century before a scholarly and critical sifting process began to compile well-authenticated and standard collections. It was a task of great responsibility and was discharged in a manner unequalled in historical research. This research brought into being a new science called *Asmā'-ur-Rijāl*: inquiry into the status, character and veracity of thousands of people in the chain of transmitters. The Hadīth literature,

consisting of sayings and doings of the Prophet, was thus graded on the basis of more or less reliability. Even after sincere and stupendous efforts the judgment of the critical collector is not immune from error, and every generation can exercise its own judgment again. But nobody can deny that, not only in broad outline, but often in point of detail, the Hadīth record is more trustworthy than the life of almost any other great man in the past.

Of course the most reliable record of the life and character of Muḥammad is the Qur'ān itself, whose standard edition was compiled by his most intimate companions and successors. The teaching and the conduct and character of the Prophet were so identical that when someone asked 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the Prophet, about the character of Muḥammad, she replied, "Don't you read the Qur'ān? It is a record and mirror of his character." From the point of view of textual authenticity no scripture can equal the Qur'ān. No other scripture can claim to be the actual book of the founder of a religion. The other Scriptures, written by scribes centuries afterwards, cannot claim even the reliability of Hadīth, because no compiler sifted them as critically as was done in the compilation of the Prophet's traditions. Higher criticism of the Old and New Testaments has shattered the reliability of these records. The modernist Christian frankly admits that the New Testament is not an exact record of the sayings and doings of Jesus, but is a description of his life and teaching as the writers of the Gospels understood and viewed them. Nobody could make such an assertion about the Qur'ān and, therefore, the Qur'ān is a standard of judgment about Hadīth literature as well. Any Hadīth which in letter or spirit contradicts the Qur'ān is to be rejected outright. But this can happen only in a few cases; with regard to the rest the Hadīth literature is on the whole a reliable record of the life and character of the Prophet and stands critically on a firmer level than the Scriptures.

of other religions.

The question of sources about the data of the life of the Prophet is of paramount importance. As we have said, the Qur'an is the most reliable source. The Book not only offers the fundamentals of Islamic religious faith and its views about God, man and the world, but is also a record of the struggle of the Prophet to uphold and promote his cause against formidable odds. It tells us how the Prophet met every challenge, and dealt with changing circumstances in the light of his principles. But the Qur'an is not an encyclopedia of all the major and minor events of his life. Throughout his prophetic life individuals brought before him their problems for advice, and multifarious situations arose which required to be dealt with in the best possible manner. Hadith literature may, in general, be considered a record of the Prophet's advice, either offered voluntarily, or in response to the inquiry of a questioner. Hadith is the implementation and amplification of the fundamental principles enunciated in the Qur'an and, after the Qur'an, is to a great extent the best source for the biography of the Prophet. But Hadith is, nevertheless, a product of historical research; and history, in the enumeration of details, particularly if recorded through generations of oral transmission, leaves room for doubt and further criticism. The pious, sincere and indefatigable collectors of Hadith, like Bukhārī and Muslim, never claimed immunity from error of judgment. The orthodox Muslim still claims the right of revision and reconsideration, if something is found in this record which is inconsistent with the rest, or is unbelievable on rational grounds, or runs obviously counter to the entire spirit of Islam and the Prophet's attitude towards life and human relations.

The third source of the life of the Prophet is the biographies of the Prophet compiled during the early centuries of Islam, the most famous being the *Sīrat* of Ibn Ishāq and *Sīrat* of Ibn Hishām. But, unfortunately,

these early biographers deal primarily with the military expeditions in which the Prophet took part, for which reason these biographies have been called *Maghāzī*. In a number of cases these biographies descend to the unreliable level of ordinary history wherein the purely individual beliefs and attitudes of the writer add, subtract or modify transmitted material, and personal bias gives fiction and mere hearsay the status of historical fact. These biographers, who called the biography of the Prophet *Maghāzī*, or campaigns, do not seem to be interested in the basic teachings of Islam, or the precept and example of the Prophet about the legal or moral aspect of multifarious affairs. All Arabian tribes were martial and, as their entire life revolved round their feuds and fights, the account of their triumphs and defeats was their staple literary diet. But the Companions of the Prophet, whose outlook on life had been transformed by Islam, began to consider these fights as an evil imposed by the necessity of establishing lasting peace and law and order. For them the thing of vital importance was the new moral teaching and laws and regulations promulgated by Islam to establish a new social order. So we find that in the authentic collections of Hadīth the account of some of the campaigns is only incidental and forms a very small part of the narrative. But the common mentality of the masses remained very much unaltered in this respect, and they loved much more to hear about military exploits than about moral exhortations and questions of law. Writers like Ibn Ishāq and Wāqidī catered to this vulgar taste. When the scrupulously critical traditionists read their books, they were filled with indignation, encountering silly and unfounded narrations in them. Nevertheless, there are some critics who consider Ibn Ishāq trustworthy, although in the opinion of others he is unreliable. As to Wāqidī, almost all serious writers of Islam have called him a consummate liar. Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal was sorely indignant about these writers and Imām Shāfi‘ī calls Wāqidī a confirmed

liar. *Khatib Baghdadi* says about *Ibn Ishaq* that his unreliability rests on the fact that, instead of resorting to reliable Muslim sources, he quotes from Jews and Christians. Even the long and sustained efforts of the Prophet had not been successful in eliminating the hypocrites from Islamic society. They were people who had entered Islamic society only because they could not openly oppose Islam any more; there was quite a large number of them in Medina. They were always looking for opportunities to vilify and misrepresent the Prophet as well as Islam. After the conquest of Mecca the Arabian tribes in large numbers thought it expedient to submit to the political power of Islam and sent deputations to pay homage to the Prophet. They claimed to have become believers, but God and His Prophet knew that faith does not enter the human soul when an individual is overpowered politically and sees no alternative to submission. There is a verse in the Qur'an referring to this false claim:

The dwellers of the desert say, We believe. Say: You do not believe but say, We submit, and faith has not yet entered into your hearts (xlii. 14).

Later on when Jews and Christians, called *Ahl al-Kitab* (people with scriptures) by the Qur'an, became Muslims, they found a good deal apparently common between their creeds and Islam. They had an abundant lore not only Biblical but based on accretions and additions of all kinds of myths and tales. These things were circulated among the Muslims and unwarily accepted by them. A good deal of this stuff entered the early commentaries of the Qur'an and was added to the undesirable element carelessly or deliberately inserted by the writers of *Maghazī*. A non-Muslim writer antagonistic to Islam, who wants to paint an unpalatable picture of this religion and its Prophet, need not invent and fabricate vicious and dubious accounts, as Medieval Europe ignorant of Muslim sources used to do. During the nineteenth

century a new species of Islamists arose in European countries; these Islamists became scholars of Arabic. They thought that the best way to discredit Islam was to attack it from Muslim sources and from authorities and books that have become respectable with antiquity. The Qur'ān was difficult to attack and misinterpret when it was understood from within itself, some verses clarifying and amplifying the meaning of other forming a consistent whole. As in many other rich and classical languages, in Arabic a word has sometimes several meanings. One way of distorting the meaning of a Qur'ānic verse is to adopt a meaning which would spoil its real sense. Even with the best of intentions on the part of the translator, the Qur'ān in many of its most significant and characteristic parts is untranslatable. Sir Hamilton Gibb is of view that translating the Qur'ān into any other language is tantamount to turning gold into clay. But when the translator is already biassed, and considers this book to be a monument of imposture, the translator's clay becomes worse than dirt. When a prejudiced translator, whose conscious or subconscious purpose is to pull down Islam as low as possible, adds his own notes and commentary also, his task is made easier by drawing upon some *Hadīth* whose authority is repudiated by Muslim scholars, or some *Maghāzī*-writers like *Waqidī*, or commentaries embodying Israelite fables and superstitions.

In this book we propose to draw directly from the Qur'ān and supplement it with only that part of *Hadīth* literature whose authenticity has stood the test formulated by scholarly critics of ancient and modern times. Where necessary we will get our material from books of *Sīrat* and *Maghāzī*, separating the grain from the chaff. We will ignore legends that usually accumulate around the birth, life and death of all great founders of creeds. We will also avoid mention of miracles which, though recognised as possible, are not an essential part of the Islamic faith.

As a matter of fact, the Qur'an has repeatedly upbraided those who seek miracles. We will present the Prophet as a superb human being, distinguishable from other human beings only by the revelation of eternal truths especially granted to him. He claimed no divinity for himself and asked his followers to call him the Servant of God. He claimed no knowledge of the Unseen nor any universal knowledge of all reality. In the affairs of life he considered himself liable to error. Having an exalted ideal of pure and dignified conduct, he was extremely sensitive even about minor slips and constantly prayed for forgiveness. He considered his special mission to be the restorer of a pure monotheistic faith, faith in a God Who is omnipotent, wise, just and merciful. For him the purpose of life is nothing else than the service of God, and by serving God he meant the actualisation of high and noble ideals rooted in the attributes of God. He considered life to be real and earnest, replete with infinite potentialities for good. He repudiated asceticism as a source of spiritual well-being. He did not believe in the dichotomy of the life of the spirit and the life of the world. For him religion meant living a full life here with a spiritual and idealistic orientation which transforms the meanest act into an act of worship. He wanted to establish, and did actually lay the foundations of, a State and Society where fundamental human rights were secured for all citizens irrespective of differences of wealth, race or creed. He preached and practised equality before law of all citizens and perfect freedom of conscience and worship. He attempted to establish not a theocracy, nor even an unbridled democracy, but what might well be described as a theo-democracy. His religion is as free of dogma as it is possible for a religion to be—unless you consider belief in God and his own mission to be a dogma. He did not want any intermediaries between an individual and his Creator Who, according to the Qur'an, is nearer to him than his own neck-vein. God is to be approached, and life

ameliorated, by rational and moral living and by communion through prayer. All powers of Nature are made potentially subservient to man; he has to understand and conquer Nature within and without and not to bow to it in superstitious fear. Neither is any man, however pure and exalted, to be worshipped as God. Islam means surrender to the will of God which is not a passive submission but identification of our desires and purposes with the Will of God, so that a Muslim's foremost duty is to actualise that Will in high and noble actions. But this identification is volitional and emotional, not the complete identification of the being and essence of the Creator and that of the creature. God remains God, howsoever much He may permeate His creation, and the creature remains a creature even when spiritualised by complete harmony with the Will of God. Life here, as seen and experienced and lived, is not the whole of reality. Our purpose should be better and higher life both here and hereafter. We reap what we sow.

2

BEFORE THE CALL

THE lives of great prophets, before the Call comes to them, appear to be uneventful in so far as the affairs of common life are concerned. Great psychical processes may be consciously or subconsciously maturing, inner doubts and conflicts and dilemmas of existence may have been clamouring for answers and solutions in the depths of the human soul, while the surface of life appears to be unruffled and smooth. This part of the life of a great soul remains mostly unrecorded except in the illegible pages of the psychic life. What was Jesus doing till past thirty years of age, no one knows; it is only guessed that he may have been helping Joseph in the work of a carpenter. About the life of Muhammad before the Call at the age of forty we know much more, although not as much as would satisfy the inquisitive mind of a biographer or the eager quest of his devotees and followers. Shorn of legends and imaginings, the life of the Prophet during the first forty years appears to be the life of a normal good citizen, healthy in body and mind, leading a virtuous life, and distinguished by his integrity and trustworthiness. His fellow citizens bestowed the title of *al-Amīn* on him, because the man would scrupulously keep his promises and covenants and discharge his trusts faithfully. He was born as a posthumous child on 20 April 571 according to the calculations made by Egyptian astronomer, Mahmūd Pāshā Falakī. His grandfather 'Abdul Muṭṭalib gave him the name of Muhammad which means 'the Praiseworthy'. For the grandfather it was only a wishful name, but history

has justified his wish or intuition. Millions upon millions of his followers have continued to praise him day and night for the last fourteen centuries and shall continue to do so for ever ; countless others who are outside the pale of the Muslim world community also praise him as a great spiritual leader.

It was a custom of the gentry of Mecca to send their infants to Bedouin tribes who lived a healthier life than the urban population and were also credited with pure Arabic speech. The Prophet's speeches and conversations present him as a man of impressive eloquence and he himself attributed this merit to having spent his early years among a very eloquent tribe, the tribe of Hawāzin. This custom continued even when the Umayyad rulers had converted the spiritual succession of the Khilāfat into a monarchy vying with Chosroes and Cæsars in luxury and pomp. The Prophet was brought back to his family at the age of six ; shortly after, his mother died. Then his octagenarian grandfather, 'Abdul Muttalib, took charge of him, but within two years he too died. It appears destiny had planned to remove external supports from him, so that he might remain a poor, helpless orphan. The grandfather at his death entrusted him to Abū Tālib, one of his ten sons. As if to increase the initial helplessness of the future leader of mankind, the family lost its power and prestige after the death of 'Abdul Muttalib ; so that, as a child of less than twelve years of age, Muhammad grazed the goats of others for small wages. Later on he once said that prophets were shepherds of mankind and, therefore, was this training given to some of them.

When he was about twelve years of age his uncle Abū Tālib decided to travel to Syria with a trading caravan. These journeys were so full of hazard that the uncle was not willing to take the child with him, but when he was about to start he could not resist the boy's entreaties to accompany him. The Muslim traditionists mention a notable incident in this journey.

When Abū Ṭālib reached the town of Busrā he lodged for a while in the monastery of a Christian monk of the name of Buḥaira. The monk on seeing the boy said, "He is the chief of the Messengers of God." On being questioned as to how he recognised him, the monk replied, "When you were descending the hill, I saw that the trees and the stones were bowing in prostration." It would be natural if miracle-loving Muslims should make much of this legend, but the curious thing is that Christian writers have very eagerly pounced upon it and enlarged it to prove that Muhammad owed all his knowledge of Nestorian Christianity to this chance encounter. Sir William Muir, who never misses the least opportunity to pull down the knowledge and character of Muhammad and who throws doubt even on the well-authenticated accounts of his life, catches hold of this flimsy legend to establish his view of Muhammad's Christian tutelage. Even Draper who is greatly appreciative of the Islamic contributions to civilisation and of the Prophet's mission, builds on this legend. He says that the religious and philosophic ideas of this Nestorian monk left a deep impression on the mind of this intelligent and impressionable child. Sir William Muir goes further and asserts that Muhammad's hatred of idolatry and polytheism and the pattern of a new reformist religion in his mind were a product of this casual contact. Will such writers, fond of building on their own little fancies, also explain Muhammad's repudiation of dogmatic Christianity, Incarnation, Atonement and Trinity through this contact ? If Muhammad at all learnt anything from this monk the effect was quite the reverse of what is sought to be established ; for he did not react except by contradicting what he was taught. Why make an abortive attempt at thrusting the knowledge of the whole of Christianity into the mind of a child, and develop patterns of his future religion by what a Christian monk says in the course of a wayside halt ? Muhammad surely had ample oppor-

tunities of hearing Jews and Christians and observing their beliefs and practices till the mature age of forty when he began to talk about them. He was a man of exceptional intelligence with a very retentive memory. The orthodox Muslim belief is also untenable that the Prophet knew nothing of Biblical lore before it was revealed to him. This is as unbelievable as the other view that there was nothing original in his teaching and that Islam was a sort of eclectic religion built out of the fragments of other creeds. Islam holds that, before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the essentials of true religion had already been developed by the commissioned messengers of God ; that the structure of spiritual life required only a last brick and that the Holy Prophet was that last brick—the last brick which completed the arch, making it stable and firm, capable of supporting the burden of human life in all its comprehensiveness. It is useless, therefore, to try to detract from the value of the Prophet's religious contribution by pointing out how much he had in common with other great spiritual religions. His contention was that the purity of spiritual religion had been corrupted by false dogmas and practices and his task was to sift the grain from the chaff. He called his creed the creed of Abraham and Moses and Jesus ; but looking at Jews and Christians as he found them he would say that Abraham was not a Jew and Jesus was not a Christian. They were all Muslims, who had identified their will with the Will of God. The monk Bahīrah instilling Christianity in the mind of a child who stops with him for a while, neither proves nor disproves anything about Islam or Muhammad, even if the story had any basis in fact. As it happens, the story is proved to be groundless. 'Allāmah Dhahabī in *Mīzān al-I'tidāl* considers it to be without any reliable authority, and 'Allāmah Shibli also, after a very critical analysis, comes to the conclusion that it has no basis in fact.

Love of Peace. It was impossible that a young man

living in the Arabian tribal society should have no experience of battle even if he did not take any active part in it. The tribe of Quraish to which the Prophet belonged clashed with the tribe of Qais. This battle is called *Harb al-Fijār* "the battle of violation," because it violated the sanctity of the war-free sacred months. An uncle of the Prophet, Zubair, was the standard-bearer of the family of Hāshim. Muḥammad as a young man may have had to accompany the family any way, but fortunately in the struggle the right was on the side of the Quraish, so he could have no moral scruples. But, as it was proved in numerous battles in which he had to defend his cause, he was averse to people being killed unless there was no other alternative left. Neither in this pre-Islamic tribal war, nor in any other campaign after the advent of Islam, was anybody killed by the hand of Muḥammad.

He was a lover of peace and a peace-maker before he had a Divine Call to arise and teach humanity the ways of peace. Perpetual tribal warfare had worked such havoc, and murder and massacre had become so common, that some wise and peace-loving individuals began seriously to seek ways and means of preventing bloodshed and uprooting the cause of it. Returning from the battle of *Fijār*, Zubair, uncle of the Prophet and standard-bearer of the Hāshimī family, held a meeting of important persons of different families in the house of 'Abdullah ibn Judān for the purpose and they entered into a covenant, called *Hilf al-Fudūl*. It was resolved that no aggressor to whatever family or tribe he might belong should be allowed to reside in Mecca and every victim of aggression should be helped. Muḥammad was a party to this covenant. After his call to prophethood he used to say that if he had been offered precious red camels in place of this covenant he would not have accepted them. Even now, he would say, "If I am invited to be a party to a covenant to stop all aggression I shall be only too glad to participate." Throughout his life

whenever he was threatened with aggression he was always craving for peaceful settlement with those who could be trusted to keep the peace. The Qur'an proclaims repeatedly, "God does not love the aggressors." If an aggressor is impervious to reason and spurns all overtures for peace, only then his power is to be actively crushed. There could be no "peace at any price" with human, brutal tyrants. After more than a decade of terrible persecution, when the Prophet's followers were permitted to stand up and ward off aggression with force, the Qur'an laid it down that this permission was granted only to those who had been driven away from their homes and had suffered persecution, but they were not allowed to become aggressors in turn. Muhammad was neither a war-monger, nor a pacifist preaching non-violent submission to tyranny. For him war was a surgical operation which was resorted to when painless remedies failed. A famous saying of the Prophet sums up succinctly his attitude to the problem of eradication of evil. "Remove evil," he said, "with your hands actively; if you are not in a position to do so, then cry aloud against it; if you are so helpless that you cannot utter a protest, abhor it in your heart, but this is the weakest manifestation of faith." Jesus is presented in the New Testament as an apostle of non-violence under all circumstances, but his view of the necessary surgical violence is the same as that of Muhammad. "If thy right eye aileth thee, take it out, for it is better that violence be done to a part than let the whole body suffer." Did he not use the scourge in the Temple compound to drive away obnoxious money-changers? The scourge would certainly have been converted into a sword if the circumstances were such as Muhammad had to face. When the Christian Church had the power to wield the sword it did use the sword freely with the conviction that Jesus would have sanctioned it, but, alas, the sword was not employed for causes which the Prince of Peace would have approved.

Even before his prophetic mission Muḥammad evinced a genius for discovering plans of peace. This is illustrated by an interesting incident. The sanctuary of Ka'bah was always flooded by rains. The Quraish, therefore, decided to demolish the old structure and rebuild it on a higher plinth. Luckily, they could purchase the planks of a wrecked ship in the port of Jeddah. Walīd ibn Mughīrah brought these planks to Mecca along with, Bāqūm a Roman mason, travelling by the wrecked ship. Different tribes divided among themselves different portions of the structure, so that none should be deprived of the privilege of this sacred reconstruction. But when it came to the fixing of the Black Stone every tribe desired to monopolise the honour; none would yield, and there appeared to be no way of settling the dispute. It came to the drawing of swords and an oath-taking, according to custom, by dipping of fingers in a bowl of blood. This was intended to indicate that one was prepared to lose one's life in the defence of a cause. There was an ominous deadlock for four days. On the fifth day the oldest man among the Quraish proposed that the issue might be decided by a providential chance. He suggested that whoever chanced to come to the place the earliest next day his arbitration in favour of anyone should be accepted by all. It so happened that Muḥammad was the first to arrive the next morning and the matter was placed in his hands. His practical genius for peaceful settlement decided the matter in a way which would satisfy everyone without leaving a trace of rancour or frustration. He spread a sheet of cloth on the ground and having placed the sacred stone on it invited the chiefs of every claimant tribe to lift the sheet together and carry it to the place where the stone was to be fixed. When they had done this he lifted the stone with his own hands and laid it in the proper place. Was this action not symbolic of the great mission that was going to be entrusted to him in the future to become the last stone of the spiritual edifice which the

great Prophets had been raising for millenniums ? The man who completes the edifice must be a harbinger of universal peace, satisfying the legitimate aspirations of all humanity.

Personal Integrity. The Meccan families were mostly families of traders and Hāshim, the illustrious ancestor of Muhammad, had entered into trade contracts with many of the Arabian tribes. We have seen that his guardian-uncle, Abū Tālib, had travelled to Syria for this purpose taking his nephew Muhammad with him when he was only twelve years old. There were people who did not themselves undertake trading, but entrusted their capital to efficient and trustworthy persons on condition that they would share the profits. Besides Muhammad's honesty in everyday dealings with others, it was his integrity in such transactions that had earned him the title of *al-Amīn*, the trustworthy. 'Abdullah ibn Abī Hamzah who, after the advent of Islam, became a follower of the Prophet, related that once, in the course of making a deal with Muhammad, he asked Muhammad to wait for a while because there was something still left in its finalisation. Muhammad consented to wait, but 'Abdullah forgot for three days to come back to him. On the third day he found Muhammad still waiting for him on the promised spot. 'Abdullah adds that Muhammad did not scold him much, as one could have expected under the circumstances, and said only this : "You put me to much trouble ; you have kept me waiting here for three days." The Qur'ānic revelation later on laid much emphasis on the fulfilment of contracts, and said that an essential trait of a spiritual man is not want of righteous indignation but controlling of anger.

These were the ingrained traits of Muhammad's character. During his whole career he never violated a contract or a covenant even when sorely tried and hard pressed in dealing with tribes who had no feeling of sanctity of promises and contracts. We will give

many examples of it later on.

Matrimony Regulated. Muhammad had travelled as a commercial agent on a profit-sharing basis to Syria, Busrā, Yemen and Bahrain. When his reputation as an honest and efficient trader was well established, he attracted the notice of a rich Meccan widow of the name of Khadījah. She was a noble lady of great purity of character and was called *Tahirah*, the Pure. It is said that in the trading caravan that started from Mecca her merchandise equalled that of all the rest combined. Khadījah was so impressed with Muhammad's reputation for fair dealing that she asked him to become her agent and take her merchandise to Syria. She promised him a much greater share of the profit than she used to offer to others. When he returned to Mecca after a successful commercial journey Khadījah considered him to be an ideal life partner if he would consent to marry her. She was a woman of forty, in a climate where women age rapidly, and Muhammad was a young man of twenty-five. Muhammad longed for material security and purity in his wife to give him peace for virtuous living and quiet contemplation, in preparation for a great mission of which he was not yet conscious but for which destiny was preparing the ground. This couple, ill-matched in years, brought about an ideal married life. The hostile critics of the Prophet should honestly and admiringly take note of this monogamous beatitude before attacking Muhammad for his later polygamous matches. If a man were temperamentally sensual, will he choose a much older woman for his wife, and live a chaste and ideal life with her in a society in which neither polygamy nor extramarital adventures were considered to be sinful? All the children except one that he had were the progeny of this ideal marriage. After the death of Khadījah he married a number of widows, young, middle-aged and old. The only virgin that he married was 'A'ishah, daughter of his devoted follower and friend, his right-hand man and

his first successor, Abū Bakr. Can an honest critic impute sensuality to a man who, for reasons of social necessity and for the consolidation of State and society, is constrained to follow, during the last decade of his life, a patriarchal pattern sanctified in the observance and practice of Great Prophets and Patriarchs before him ? The unjust critic tolerates the Biblical polygamy of these Prophets and Patriarchs as divinely approved, but when it comes to Muḥammad he imputes sensuality as a motive. Will a sensual man, having the prestige and power to choose young and beautiful virgins from an extensive realm, prefer widows only ? If it was dictated by sexual urge, would not a healthy man like him produce at least two dozen children from about ten wives, a man who had a large number of children from an old widow like Khadījah? In all these later marriages he had only one son from his Coptic wife Maria. This fact is a sufficient proof of the kind of non-sensual relation he had with the widows who lived under the roof of his "Widow's Home". His adverse critics, forgetting his truly ideal monogamous marriage which endured for about twenty-five years, till the age when man's sexual urges subside a good deal, begin to think of his later marriages on the analogy of an Oriental potentate's *harem*. Do they stop to ponder for a while whether a sensual potentate's *harem* could be of this nature ? If you do not judge the great ones of distant epochs and of quite different historical backgrounds in proper historical perspective (which requires knowledge as well as historical imagination), you fall into the error of accusing all of them of various types of sins and crimes. Muḥammad's contemporary adversaries and enemies accused him of many things, but not of sensuality or immorality because, in that age, a patriarch was expected to have a polygamous household. Look at the institution of slavery, now looked upon as the most inhuman of human institutions. A slave-holder in any civilised society today

will be morally, legally and socially condemned. But which fool would retrospectively condemn all the saints and prophets and pious men of old times because they held slaves and concubines ? You will have to condemn many a great soul of antiquity from Abraham downwards if you anachronistically apply to them inapplicable standards. The communists to-day have begun to repeat the French socialist Proudhon's dictum that all property is theft, but in a capitalist society a person is valued by the amount of his capital and property. If you once admit the dictum that all property over and above your personal needs is theft, all your big land-owners and millionaires become thieves and dacoits. Similar is the case of sex. All ascetic religions dubbed sex as sinful; a highly spiritual person should avoid it as spiritual venom. From this viewpoint even a good monogamous marriage is a kind of degradation and is to be tolerated only as an evil necessity. As St Paul said, it is better to marry than to burn. From this angle, one marriage would be tolerable but a second one would be criminal, whatever may be the circumstances justifying or necessitating it. "Do you know," says Tertullian addressing women, "that you are each Eve (who caused the fall of man) ? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age ; the guilt of necessity must live too. You are the devils' gateway ; . . . you are the first deserter of the Divine Law ; you destroyed as easily God's image."

Although Christian society has been changed beyond recognition in modern times and its laws are undergoing rapid secularisation, its religious men are still haunted by the notion originally strengthened by St Paul and many other Church Fathers like St Bernard, St Anthony, St Jerome, St Cyprian, that sex satisfaction is unworthy of a spiritual man. Jesus happened to be a bachelor and his life being an exemplar for his followers is deemed to recommend celibacy both for men and women. A spiritual guide like Jesus, according to the common Christian belief, should not

even be born as a result of normal sex union ; he must be the product of immaculate conception because normal sex is contamination. The mother of Jesus, also called the Mother of God (a thoroughly pagan conception), is worshipped as "Virgin Mary" although she was the mother of at least six children besides Jesus. There were four boys—James, Joses, Simon and Jude, and the number of sisters is uncertain. Liberal Protestants and modernists know and believe this as a fact and have discarded the early Christian idea of the sinfulness of sex, but Catholics are still asked to believe (against all evidence) that the other children were not Mary's, but Joseph's by an earlier marriage, or the children of Mary's presumed sister Mary Cleophas.

Jesus was not a lawgiver, and he taught his followers to keep the Mosaic Law not simply in letter but in spirit, adding the correct attitude of the heart to external observance. He was supplementing mere legality with morality and spirituality, and he correctly characterised his mission as not the destruction of the law but its fulfilment both in letter and spirit. Now the law that he did not propose to alter was Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law practised by the house of Jacob allowed, and even encouraged, polygamy to an extent which must sound fantastic. A patriarch among the Israelites could with a good conscience have one thousand wives and concubines and still be considered good and wise like Solomon. Jesus tried to reform the self-indulgence of his tribe, but polygamy, though freely practised by his own people, did not occur to him as a matter for reform. Monogamy was first made a matter of legislation in the West by the Emperor Justinian, a Roman (and pagan) jurist.

Polygamy was never restricted or regulated by any religious code. A Jew following the Mosaic Law even today may have as many wives as he likes or can afford, and so may a Hindu, according to his *Shastras*. Only Islam has taken notice of polygamy

and regulated it. According to the Qur'an, under special circumstances a man who can afford it may marry up to four women on condition that he does even-handed justice to more than one wife and her children. If he cannot do that he is ordered to be monogamous. In another verse the Muslims are warned that they will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to abide by this condition, because this condition makes polygamy not a luxury but a great responsibility and a burden. In societies which are proud of their monogamous legislation, the second or third woman cannot be kept as an honourable wife but must remain a mistress ; adultery is preferred to bigamy or polygamy. In the legally monogamous Christian West fornication is not a crime, and the law takes no notice of men and women living in sexual intimacy without contracting a civil or religious marriage. And these nations stigmatise the Muslims as polygamous! The number of bastards and illegitimate children with all the shame and cruelty that it involves for the innocents is enormous. And they go on saying that Muhammed was a voluptuary and Muslims are oversexed beasts ! Is it because the Muslims prefer wives to mistresses ?

Muhammed set an example of ideal monogamous marriage to be practised in the normal conditions of life ; but as Islam was legislating for all grades of culture and all kinds of circumstances it allowed restricted and regulated polygamy attaching such a condition to it that a pious Muslim would not hazard it except in very extraordinary circumstances. When circumstances compelled Muhammed to shelter under his roof many wives (many of them were widows of Muslims as well as non-Muslims), he set an example of personal sacrifice and not self-indulgence. He rendered equal justice to all of them, not favouring the young and the beautiful against the plain-faced and the old. If he had not set this example for women caught in adverse circumstances, as must happen

after great wars, he would not have been an exemplar for all people under all circumstances. Is it not a great contribution to the decencies of life that this has made illegitimacy almost unknown in Muslim countries, and eradicated the problem of thousands of women compelled to live as mistresses or demimondaines, or obliged to walk whole nights in the streets, offering their bodies and souls to the devil, and spreading moral corruption and venereal disease, and encouraging promiscuity? In the matter of sex-morality the Christian West is in a bad plight; those who have lived in that society know all about it without the statistics of Kinsey and without reading Judge Lindsay's books on *Companionate Marriage* and the *Revolt of Youth*.

This digression about marriage and polygamy became necessary because the Western hostile critic of Islam and Muhammad makes Muhammad the target of his sinister attacks simply because Muhammad in the last decade of his life married many women and because Islam allows polygamy. No other creed has prohibited, or even restricted and regulated, it as Islam has done. If Oriental monarchs and potentates have indulged in polygamy and created *harems* of beautiful women admitting or discarding them at the dictation of their wild sexual urges, there is no Islamic sanction about it, however much they might have deceived themselves and others. Their indulgence was no more Islamic than the successive and repetitive polygamy and polyandry of Hollywood is Christian.

Let the Western critic be just to Muhammad, who set an example both for ideal monogamous marriage and restricted polygamy based on social necessities and social justice.

Let us quote at the end the British thinker and writer Carlyle who picked up Muhammad as a hero from among all the prophets. To the charge that Muhammad, having established his power and prestige, became ambitious and self-indulgent, Carlyle has

to make this eminently fair reply. How could you call such a man ambitious who "seems to have lived in a most affectionate, peaceable, wholesome way with his wedded benefactress ; loving her truly, and her alone. It goes greatly against the impostor theory, the fact that he lived in this entirely unexceptionable, entirely quiet and commonplace way, till the heat of his years was done" (*Heroes and Hero-Worship*, p. 65).

It is a commonly accepted psychological fact to which Carlyle has referred that till the mature age of forty a person's character, in its main trends, is formed and stabilised, and the foundations of his life attitudes are firmly laid. If a man is ambitious in any direction that trend will show itself in his major and minor dealings; if he is sensual and luxury-loving, the fact cannot remain concealed and suppressed till a person has passed the meridian of his life.

The "Impostor Theory" of the West Considered. There is no doubt that in the life of a great prophet there is a turning point when he receives a call to shake his people from their unspiritual, ingrained habits and customs. It is said that the Spirit of the Lord, or the Grace of God, chooseth its instrument as it pleaseth, but surely there must be some special moral and spiritual ground already prepared, and a man must be specially gifted in a particular direction. In every other sphere of life genius begins to manifest itself fairly early in life. Some great scientists and mathematicians have related about their epoch-making discoveries that these discoveries were not the result of any conscious effort; the ideas emerged suddenly when they were little expected. The fall of an apple brought out the vision of the universal law of gravitation before the mind of Newton, but it was only to a scientific genius like him that a common and trivial occurrence could suggest a law of universal import. There is no example of a commonplace man with no special aptitudes or gifts whom a sudden inspiration or revelation made a creative genius miraculously.

The Western hostile critics of Muhammad tried to establish on very doubtful grounds that Muhammad had accepted without demur the moral and religious ideas of the society which gave him birth; till a catastrophic religious experience, which they imagine to be a psychopathic phenomenon, made him realise the omnipotence of the One and Only God. They try to raise a superstructure on the flimsy foundations of two reports. The one is that a son of Muhammad by Khadījah, who died in infancy, was named 'Abdul 'Uzzā as 'Uzzā was one of the chief idols of the Quraish. The report originated with a narrator of the name of Ismā'īl ibn Abī Uwais whom almost all scholarly critics of Hadīth have dubbed as unreliable and a concoctor of false traditions. But, even if the report were a fact, it cannot prove Muhammad's approval of, or belief in, the gods and idols of his tribe. His wife, whose son this child was, lived in the beliefs and customs of pre-Islamic days, and it was belief in the validity of Muhammad's first revelation which converted her to Islam and bestowed on her the honour and privilege of being the first woman convert. She might have named her son 'Abdul 'Uzzā and the husband, who never disturbed domestic peace, might not have violently objected to it. Respecting the faith of a non-Muslim wife was later promulgated as an injunction divinely revealed in the Islamic code of marriage. A Muslim is allowed to marry a Christian or a Jewish woman or, with a liberal extension of the permission, a woman of any civilised community who professes to believe in a revealed scripture. He is enjoined to follow strictly the Qur'ānic injunction that compulsion in religion is categorically prohibited. If Muhammad did not disturb the pre-Islamic faith of his loyal, affectionate and devoted wife when she chose to name her son after an idol, there is no occasion to draw any unwarranted conclusion about the pre-Islamic beliefs of Muhammad himself. How deliberately dishonest and malicious some of the Arabist Orientalists of the West are may be

illustrated by the unfounded statement of Professor Margoliouth of Oxford that Muhammad and his wife Khadījah were wont to worship the idol 'Uzzā before retiring in the night. He professes to base this statement on a report of Ahmad ibn Hanbal which runs as follows:

A neighbour of Khadījah bint Khuwaylid told me that he heard the Holy Prophet say these words to Khadījah : "O Khadījah! By God, I never worship Lāt and 'Uzzā." Khadījah said: "Leave aside Lāt, leave aside 'Uzzā." He (the transmitter) said: "Lāt and 'Uzzā were the idols which the Arabs worshipped before retiring to bed.

Even a student with elementary knowledge of Arabic could not draw this conclusion from the quotation given above. It states clearly that the Arabs used to worship 'Uzzā before retiring, and Muhammad said to Khadījah that he was not going to worship Lāt and 'Uzzā. This is a specimen of how the malicious Western critics of Muhammad and Islam shamelessly twist a clear statement and put their false construction before their readers, posing as authorities on Islam because they have learnt Arabic. How should one explain this deliberate falsification except that it was motivated by blind malice !

Margoliouth, like many other so-called Western authorities on Islam, also uses another stratagem. In the study of Hadīth literature we come across quite a number of discredited and false reporters, condemned by Muslim critical scholars as consummate liars and fabricators of Hadīth. The Western writers on Islam show great love for them and would pick them up in preference to well-authenticated authorities. This is what the newspapers of political parties do in our own times in the selection of news. They would not print the reports that go against them and, if obliged to do so, they would print them in small type on a page generally passed over by the readers, but they would splash in big type on the front page something un-

verified which is just a rumour or hearsay. This selection of news is a diabolical art. Many of the Western writers on Islam are adepts in this art. Margoliouth has also stated that Muḥammad, in pre-Islamic days sacrificed a grey-coloured sheep to the idol 'Uzzā. He quotes Wellhausen who ultimately gets it from Kalbī, known to Muslim scholars as a consummate liar.

Muḥammad was considered a truthful man even by his bitter opponents who were fighting to smash him and his new religion. They said he was mad, or was only a poet, or was bewitched and self-deluded, but the bitterest foe never accused him of telling a lie or concealing the truth even if it went against him. The small mistakes of his judgment in some cases are immortalised in the Qur'ānic revelation. No impostor would damage his reputation and prestige in this manner. Mrs Besant, the well-known preacher of theosophy, once said in a lecture delivered on Muḥammad and Islam that such a record in the Qur'ān itself, which is broadcast to the world for all times to come, and which the followers of Muḥammad recite every day, is the clearest proof of the Prophet's integrity and unsullied sincerity. At the start of his mission he gathered the leaders of the Quraish, including his intractable uncle Abū Lahab, to address them about their impending fate if they would not heed the Divine warning that he wanted to communicate. He questioned them first about his own truthfulness. "Have you ever found me telling a lie?" They all said: "No. You are a truthful person." He then asked them: "Will you believe me if I were to tell you that a large enemy host was approaching from behind this hill?" They said they would believe it if he assured them on his own evidence. After this he delivered his great warning which, as could have been expected, exasperated them.

We might consider this issue from another point of view also. During the twenty-three years of his ministry, his followers and companions used freely to

refer to their false beliefs and cruel, detestable practices in the Days of Ignorance. Many of them were men of his own age and his own community, for whom his pre-prophetic life was an open page. Did they ever refer to anything detestable which they had noticed or heard; or, would such a truthful man, who continuously urged his followers to conceal no bit of evidence even if it went against themselves, keep quite about any irreligious, or objectionable, thing that he may have believed or practised before his own enlightenment? Had anything like this actually happened, he would surely have related it, and if he had related it, it would surely have been reliably reported. That is why malicious critics from other creeds and nations have been put to the trouble of concocting or distorting evidence or of seeking for mendacious (and universally condemned) reporters. Men of strong personality and character, who believed in him and became devoted to him when he was a helpless and persecuted man, were not overwhelmed by anything miraculous about him. It was his character and the truth stamped on his face that convinced them of the veracity of his prophetic claim. As there is love at first sight in the case of some lovers; so it is conviction at first sight when you are face to face with a great soul. In many cases a person began believing in him by merely seeing him. One of them looked at his face and said, "This is not the face of a liar."

The Qur'an itself records about him that before Truth was revealed to him he was a seeker of Truth and that the essentials of a true faith were not yet manifest to him. It was God Who in the fullness of time guided him when his thirst for Truth and Guidance had reached a certain degree of intensity. It was this search that made him retire for days together to the cave of Hirā' where, in quiet and concentrated contemplation, he groped for answers to the eternal questions of human life and existence in general. It was in this retirement that he must have constantly

reviewed the unreality and sham of the idolatrous and immoral life of the benighted people among whom he lived a quiet life, observing and mentally criticising, without violent protest. There were a few other men of similar inclinations who had repudiated the polytheism and idolatry of their countrymen. Some like Waraqah ibn Naufal and 'Uthmān, finding Christianity much more satisfying than these baseless creeds, were converted to Christianity. Others like Zaid ibn 'Umar believed in One God but did not know how to approach and worship Him. Zaid died repeating: "O God, if I had known how to worship thee I would have done it."

Retirement to caves for meditation, contemplation and worship was a common phenomenon among the ascetics of all creeds. But the followers of these creeds had definite dogmas and beliefs and modes of worship; Muḥammad had none of this because he was yet only an earnest seeker seeking for answers to vital questions. Even the early Muslims speculated as to what the Prophet might have been doing and thinking in these solitudes and silences. *'Aīnī*, a standard commentary on the collection of *Bukhārī*, says under this heading that it was contemplation of the realities and lessons of life. Muḥammad's illustrious spiritual ancestor Abraham also had gone through this phase of seeking and questioning, his mind moving from one natural phenomenon to another, reviewing the objects of ancient worship—the sun, the moon and the stars—and rejecting one after the other all of them as impermanent forces subject to change and decay, and hence unworthy of homage and worship. Among Western writers Carlyle has also speculated on this contemplative phase in the life of Muḥammad. He has made the following observations in his own inimitable style (*ibid.*, pp. 64-7):

What of this infinite Universe he, from his dim place, with his own eyes and thoughts, could take in, so much and no more of it was he to know. Curious, if we will reflect on it, this of having no books. Except by what he could see for himself, or hear of by

uncertain rumour of speech in the obscure Arabian Desert, he could know nothing. The wisdom that had been before him or at a distance from him in the world, was in a manner as good as not there for him. Of the great brother souls, flame-beacons through so many lands and times, no one directly communicates with this great soul. He is alone there, deep down in the bosom of the Wilderness; has to grow up so,—alone with Nature and his own Thoughts. . . . A silent great soul; he was one of those who cannot *but* be in earnest; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen himself in formulas; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things. The great Mystery of Existence, as I said, glared-in upon him, with its terrors, with its splendours; no hearsays could hide that unspeakable fact, "Here am I!" Such *sincerity*, as we named it, has in very truth something of divine. The word of such a man is a Voice direct from Nature's own Heart. Men do and must listen to that as to nothing else;—all else is wind in comparison. From of old, a thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man: What am I? What is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which men name Universe? What is Life; what is Death? What am I to believe? What am I to do? The grim rocks of Mount Hara, of Mount Sinai, the stern sandy solitudes answered not. The great Heaven rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul, and what of God's inspiration dwelt there, had to answer!

It is the thing which all men have to ask themselves; which we too have to ask, and answer. This . . . man felt it to be of *infinite* moment; all other things of no moment whatever in comparison. The jargon of argumentative Greek Sects, vague traditions of Jews, the stupid routine of Arab Idolatry: there was no answer in these. A Hero, as I repeat, has this first distinction, which indeed we may call first and last, the Alpha and Omega of his whole Heroism, That he looks through the shows of things into *things*. . . . The great Reality stands glaring there upon *him*. He there has to answer it, or perish miserably. Now, even now, or else through all Eternity never! Answer it; *thou* must find an answer.

We have given this long soul-stirring quotation from a modern British thinker who saw through the maliciousness of propaganda about the sincerity of the Prophet, and made his own soul re-echo the vibration and turmoil in the soul of a spiritual Hero. The essential purity of the life of Muhammad, before the Call

and after, stands out so vividly against the Meccan background of persecution and privation that even his hostile British biographer Sir William Muir cannot but acknowledge that during the long period of seeking truth and suffering terrible persecutions the man stood like a rock of virtue and conviction. Muir concedes that Muhammad possessed a purity of character which was rare among the Meccan community.

The Last Ten Years. However, the common assertion of the majority of Western writers that Muhammad's character deteriorated in the last decade of his life, when he gained power in Medina, calls for a rebuttal. He is accused of becoming ambitious and ruthless in the attempt to establish his religion and consolidate political power. Another charge added to this is his polygamy in the last decade of his life. We have dealt briefly with this latter accusation which disregards a millenniums-old patriarchal family pattern, not only among the Hebrews and Semitics in general, but also among other races and nations in that phase of culture. This accusation is the result of a common fallacy in which short-sighted writers often fall, the fallacy of judging the inevitable patterns of one civilisation by standards imported from another. To judge a distant culture correctly one needs historical perspective and historical imagination. Not even the great reformers and teachers can shake themselves free from the customs and institutions of the society in which they are born and live and work. As Goethe remarked: The door by which a man enters life determines to a very great extent his ideas, attitudes and practices. In ancient patriarchal and tribal societies marriage alliances among various tribes created bonds of fraternity not attainable by any other means. Then, in societies in which widows could not make a living and get necessary protection and support, while the number of marrying men was reduced by a constant state of war, it was not a vice but a virtue to marry a widow even as a second wife, as it was enjoined in

Mosaic legislation; a married man who refused to marry a brother's widow committed a sin. If we examine one by one the later marriages of Muhammad we can see that every one of them was an act of noble human considerations and no small personal sacrifice, for a man burdened with enormous public and private duties and responsibilities, and living a life of voluntary poverty which could not maintain even a single household free from the anxiety of daily bread. The hostile Western critic may well remember that Muhammad was not marrying lovely virgins and lodging them in palatial *harems* like the Oriental potentates before and after him. Up to the end when he had become the undisputed ruler of the whole of Arabia he would not take for himself, and for the women whom he sheltered, but the roughest of a pair of clothes or of simple food necessary to keep body and soul together. His unjust and cruel critics go on dinging into the ears of a "legally monogamous" Western society that the man who married so many women (at an age when the sex urge has lost all virility) was a "voluptuary". According to this judgment, how many voluptuary prophets and patriarchs will you find in the Bible which is believed to be a revealed book? Why make a target of poor Muhammad only who led for twenty-five years an ideal monogamous life, the only real family life he had, before affairs of State and urgent social needs compelled him to shelter a number of women in lawful wedlock to offer them respectable security. As we shall see later in this book, he showed greater consideration for the rights of women than was allowed by any creed before him.

The other oft-repeated charge relates, as we have already said above, to his military efforts to secure his creed and his hard-pressed community of followers from cruel tribes for whom battles and booty were the *raison d'être* of life. These tribes had never been taught the arts of peace and, for an able-bodied man, to die in bed meant ignominious death. It happened some-

times that when an Arab warrior was mortally wounded in combat, and was about to expire, he asked to be lifted up and put into the saddle, to create the appearance of having died fighting. From the time that Moses led his enslaved Hebrews out of the thralldom of Egypt down to the last phases of Israelite history, the Jews, the Chosen People of the Lord of Hosts, led by their prophets and leaders and kings, were engaged in a constant bloody struggle, and were religiously taught ruthlessness and indiscriminate massacre of whole cities, sparing neither women and children nor the sick and the old. From one end to the other the Old Testament is a sanguinary record of murder in the name of religion. Moses promised the Israelites a land of milk and honey if they invaded certain fertile lands inhabited by people who had neither known them nor done them any wrong, their only crime being worship of gods other than Jehovah. Those who hold the Old Testament to be the only scripture (as the Jews do), or believe it, as the Christians, to be a part of the total scripture, *ipso facto*, regard the whole of this sanguinary history to be justified and divinely ordained. But, when judging Muhammad, they suddenly change their standards, and say that Muhammad ceased to be a prophet when he began to legislate and teach how friends and foes have to be dealt with. It is mostly Christian writers who insist on the judgment that Muhammad was a good prophet while he was only preaching and teaching high morality and religion in Mecca and, with a handful of followers, was suffering persecution and total economic civil boycott, and while his devotees were eating grass and drinking soup of boiled old shoes. The real reason of the Christian assault on Muhammad on account of his battle with the tribes is that for them the standard of spirituality is suffering persecution and martyrdom. In this respect they have, primarily, Jesus and, secondarily, Christian ascetic saints before their mind.

If Muhammad had been killed in Mecca after prolonged persecution without having triumphed over his enemies they might perhaps have canonised him later as a Christian saint because of his reverence for Jesus. On this account, in the earlier stages, the Meccan idolaters could not distinguish the early Muslims from the Christians, so that when the Roman Christians were defeated by the Persians, the Meccans taunted the Muslims and warned them of the same fate that had overtaken their brethren, the Christians of Rome. But Muhammad and his followers, who had to usher in a new era of civilisation and put to practice a whole new ideology, were destined to overcome all opposition in the lifetime of the Prophet, so as to serve as beacons of light for future generations. Jesus preached love of God and Man for about three years and, according to the Christian belief, was crucified by his opponents. He fought no battle because of the (previous and contemporary) experience of bloody Jewish revolts having been ruthlessly suppressed by the Romans. He had in fact come to the conclusion that violent resistance would do no good. He said that he had brought the sword, but he had no opportunity to wield it in self-defence or in defence of the cause. He knew that the circumstances were such that they who wielded the sword "shall perish by the sword". In this general statement he made no distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous use of the sword. This has left the Christians in a dilemma. The Christians have waged, and are still waging, more holy and unholy wars than the followers of any other creed, though the descendants of the Crusaders continue to call Islam "the religion of the sword". With respect to war and peace the creed and conduct of Muhammad offer the best teaching and a model guidance, as we shall see later while dealing with Muhammad's ethics of war and peace. History has demonstrated repeatedly that righteous causes have had not only martyrs but also self-respecting champions of strong determination and

iron will, capable of using force, fighting successfully, till genuine freedom is secured for all. Suffering persecution for the sake of a noble cause is a necessary initial phase in every great and forward movement of human culture. The upholders of a noble cause have to be tested first by the fire of persecution and martyrdom, and then they have to be tested again by victory and power. Many a persecuted group become tyrannical in the moment of its triumph, and if it was a religious cause religion is often corrupted by the acquisition of power. It has been aptly remarked by the great American spiritual essayist that religion generates power and power thus created devours religion: the daughter devours the mother. Let us describe briefly the initial phase of persecution and see how Muhammad and those inspired by his teaching and personal example stood it. The great test of sincerity and integrity is endurance of suffering and the spirit of sacrifice. In the next chapter, therefore, we take up a discussion of the Call that led to opposition and persecution.

3

THE CALL

The Nature of Prophetic Revelation. What was the nature of this Call? Should we try to understand the origin of it? Naturalistic psychology attempts to explain this experience in accordance with its own method. If normal psychology offers no satisfactory solution, abnormal psychology is resorted to, according to which inner conflicts and intense emotions begin to create hallucinations, and one's personality is split into two parts—the dominant idea personalised into one who issues the command and the passive recipient of the idea functioning as the other dissociated part. Now para-psychology has come to study psychical facts and phenomena and to point to supra-naturalistic origins. The depth psychology of the subconscious, led by Freud, Jung and Adler, is trying to explain away religious experiences by sex-rooted or power-rooted complexes or by manifestations of the racial unconscious. The problem of religious experience is a vast and complex one; the so-called religious experiences are not all of one type. I would refer the reader to that scholarly and classical book of William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, in which he has objectively surveyed a vast field. This variety of religious experience, with its diversities and contradictions, is baffling. I will mention here only two of James's conclusions which he has presented very convincingly. He begins his book with the question of physiological and functional abnormalities often found in great religious geniuses, prophets and saints, from which the naturalists and medical psychologists have

drawn the hasty and unjustified conclusion that religious experiences are the product of these abnormalities. Max Nordau has gone to the extreme in calling all geniuses abnormal degenerates and neurotics. With respect to religious genius James draws quite a contrary conclusion. He is of view that the normal human nervous system and metabolism are meant by Nature to be instruments or correlates of common biological existence and they work normally along with ordinary states of consciousness. But normal, everyday consciousness does not cover the entire realm of the spirit. There is sufficient evidence of types of consciousness belonging to quite different dimensions of being not comprehended by our ordinary categories of sense and understanding. When these other types of consciousness, with quite different ideas and emotions, erupt into the normal mind and body, they tend to disrupt them temporarily while the invasion lasts, or may even damage the physical system permanently. Such physical conditions which look pathological are not the causes of an extraordinary type of experience, but the effects of it. To understand the validity of religious experience we have to broaden and deepen our theory of knowledge as well as extend our idea of Reality beyond that comprehended by the senses and the logical intellect.

"As a matter of fact a religious life, exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and eccentric. I speak not now of your ordinary religious believer, who follows the conventional observances of his country, whether it be Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan. His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit. It would profit us little to study this secondhand religious life. We must make search rather for the original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct. These experiences we can only find

in individuals for whom religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever rather. But such individuals are 'geniuses' in the religious line ; and like many other geniuses who have brought forth fruits effective enough for commemoration in the pages of biography, such religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability. Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas ; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence . . . '(William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 6).

'The nature of genius has been illuminated by the attempts . . . to class it with psychopathical phenomena. Borderland insanity, crankiness, insane temperament, loss of mental balance, psychopathic degeneration (to use a few of the many synonyms by which it has been called), has certain peculiarities and liabilities which, when combined with a superior quality of intellect in an individual, make it more probable that he will make his mark and affect his age, than if his temperament were less neurotic. There is of course no special affinity between crankiness as such and superior intellect, for most psychopaths have feeble intellects, and superior intellects more commonly have normal nervous systems. But the psychopathic temperament, whatever be the intellect with which it finds itself paired, often brings with it ardor and excitability of character. The cranky person has extraordinary emotional susceptibility. He is liable to fixed ideas and obsessions. His conceptions tend to

pass immediately into belief and action ; and when he gets a new idea, he has no rest till he proclaims it, or in some way 'works it off'. . . . When a superior intellect and psychopathic temperament coalesce—as in the endless permutations and combinations of human faculty, they are bound to coalesce often enough—in the same individual, we have the best possible condition for the kind of effective genius that gets into the biographical dictionaries. Such men do not remain mere critics and understanders with their intellect. Their ideas possess them, they inflict them, for better or worse, upon their companions or their age . . ." (ibid., pp. 22-3).

"In the psychopathic temperament we have the emotionality which is the *sine qua non* of moral perception ; we have the intensity and tendency to emphasis which are the essence of practical moral vigor ; and we have the love of metaphysics and mysticism which carry one's interests beyond the surface of the sensible world. What, then, is more natural than that this temperament should introduce one to regions of religious truth, to corners of the universe, which your robust Philistine type of nervous system, forever offering its biceps to be felt, thumping its breast, and thanking Heaven that it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition, would be sure to hide forever from its self-satisfied possessors ?

"If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity . . ." (ibid., p. 25).

"If we look on man's whole mental life as it exists, on the life of men that lies in them apart from their learning and science, and that they inwardly and privately follow, we have to confess that the part of it of which rationalism can give an account is relatively superficial. It is the part that has the prestige undoubtedly, for it has the loquacity, it can challenge you for proofs, and chop logic, and put you down

with words. But it will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions. If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhibits. Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result and something in you absolutely *know* that that result must be truer than any logicchopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it. This inferiority of the rationalistic level in founding belief is just as manifest when rationalism argues for religion as when it argues against it. . . .

"The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion. Then, indeed, our intuitions and our reason work together, and great world-ruling systems, like that of the Buddhist or of the Catholic philosophy, may grow up. Our impulsive belief is here always what sets up the original body of truth, and our articulately verbalized philosophy is but its showy translation into formulas. The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition. Instinct leads, intelligence does but follow. If a person feels the presence of a living God . . . your critical arguments, be they never so superior, will vainly set themselves to change his faith" (*ibid.*, pp. 73-4).

Reality manifests itself and reveals its nature in the physical universe in mathematical order, beauty and sublimity. It also manifests itself in the intellect that tries to mirror it or comprehend it by laws of logic and causation. The norms and standards of pure reason are not products of physically manifested being, but are logically prior to it, transcending the world of

change and becoming, as Plato stated and, two millenniums after him, Kant re-stated in a modified form in his theory of knowledge. The religious experience of prophets and saints points to another dimension of being, and mystics of all great spiritual religions bear testimony to a type of consciousness and knowledge which cannot be described either in terms of the senses or the categories of logical understanding. The great mystic theologian, al-Ghazālī, states about knowledge from personal experience that as the eye, however sharp-sighted it may be, cannot by any effort hear sounds, nor the ear see sights, so the senses and the intellect are inappropriate media for the comprehension and communication of supra-sensual and supra-rational experiences emerging from a different dimension of being and a different type of consciousness. The philosopher-poet Rūmī tries to enlighten the uninitiated further about the nature of revelations originating in that ineffable Divine realm of the spirit. He says that when they emerge in our normal consciousness they enter the realm of symbolism and dramatic imagination. The pictures of angels and devils and hell and heaven are formed at the level of the symbolic imagination. He illustrates this from the phenomena of our dreams. Dreams are symbolic as has been understood for thousands of years, but at the back of the dream symbolism are realities, the conflicts and aspirations of the dreamer, which express themselves dramatically. The dreamer's ideas and emotions are personified and materialised. The persons of his dream are not there when the dreamer is dreaming about them; it is the dreamer's consciousness which is assuming these shapes, the purpose being the veiled expression of the dreamer's ideas and feelings. After giving this psychological explanation Rūmī warns his readers not to consider Divine revelation as a mere dream. As a person's individual urges express themselves in the symbolism of his dreams, so the Divine urges that do not originate in the individual are symbolised when they enter the

realm of ordinary consciousness of the recipient of the revelation. Transition from one level of consciousness and being to another and lower level necessarily creates this symbolism which moulds itself generally into the traditional forms and beliefs of the recipient. So that, an essentially similar experience may put itself in different moulds; the symbolism may differ from creed to creed, from nation to nation and from epoch to epoch, though the reality expressed is fundamentally the same. To quote Carlyle again who, judging the nature of the revolutionary Call of Muhammad, says:

Such a man is what we call an *original* man; he come to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We may call him Poet, Prophet, God;—in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man's words. Direct from the Inner Fact of things;—he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that. . . . Really his utterances, are they not a kind of 'revelation';—what we must call such for want of some other name? It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things. God has made many revelations: but this man too, has not God made him, thela test and newest of all? The 'inspiration of the Almighty giveth *him* understanding': we must listen before all to him (*Heroes and Hero-Worship*, pp. 55-6).

In the long quiet and persistent seeking for the Truth of life up to the age of forty we find no physical phenomenon that may be called a religious experience, although he had been leading an exemplary moral life of peaceful domesticity and useful citizenship which, in his own words as reported in *Sahīh Bukhārī*, forms about three quarters of religious faith. We find him free from complexes and emotional upheavals and there is no sign of neuroticism in his attitude towards life. Ideas may have been maturing at the subconscious level, preparing the man to receive the Call when at last it did come. Who knows the nature of an angel appearing at such a critical and revolutionary moment? Is such an angel a personal entity or a Divine force symbolised as a person? Some great mystic philosophers

like Rūmī, who themselves have had such an experience, consider angels to be symbols of the regulative laws of phenomenal existence; Rūmī calls them manifestations of Universal Reason which permeates all existence. In the prose collection of his views and utterances, *Fīhi Mā Fīhi*, he says that the angels with wings are like birds made of wax which, if melted, will leave nothing but wax. Their substance is nothing but Universal Reason which, in some spiritual states, appears in the garb of sense symbolism. Dealing with the revelation of the saints and prophets, he says that they are firmly united with the reality of the human spirit which is Divine at the same time. When the human spirit realises its identity with the Divine spirit, the revelation may be viewed as the product of an awakening of the inherently Divine in man or a message from God Who resides in the essence and depth of the human soul. The great mystic and theologian, Shāh Walīullāh, has written an illuminating chapter on spiritual symbolism in his classical book *Hujjatullāh-il-Bālighah*, wherin he says that in the spiritual experiences of saints abstract truths are concretised as physical and material symbols; the man of knowledge knows the difference between the symbol and the reality thus symbolised. Shāh Walīullāh quotes in this connection many examples and sayings of the Prophet. The Prophet said that in the Immortal Spiritual Realm death shall be symbolised as an animal that is killed and done away with.

Revelation of the First Sūrah of the Qur'ān. The value of prophetic revelation, however, does not depend on the accompanying physical media or symbols; their value is to be judged ultimately by the standard of the eternal verities and intrinsic values of life. The first revelatory command addressed to the Prophet by the Divine messenger is contained in the following verses of the Qur'ān:

Read in the name of thy Lord, Who created; (He) created man from clotted blood. Read, and thy Lord is the Most Generous

Who taught (to write) with the pen; (He) taught man what he knew not (xcvi. 1-5).

The verses contain the basic truths which Muhammad was commissioned to revive, teach and propagate. "Recite in the name of *Rabb*, the Creator of the Universe." The word *Rabb* cannot be translated by any one word in English. It has a double connotation in Arabic and in Qur'anic vocabulary. According to Rāghib, the most scholarly lexicographer of the Qur'ān, *Rabb* means the Lord Who not only creates, but nurtures and develops the potentialities of His creatures, so that they may attain the perfection of their inherent qualities. He is not the transcendent God of deism who, having once set the Creation in motion, leaves it to work out its destiny mechanically, without any further supervision and guidance. The word *Rabb*, in its verbal form, means nourishing and is used in many verses of the Qur'ān. Simple belief in the one Creator God was nothing new. Not only did the monotheists of many creeds believe in God, but even the idolatrous polytheists of Arabia and elsewhere professed belief in His existence. The function of Islam was not to prove the mere abstract existence of God, but to teach the world the essential attributes of the One God, which even the followers of great spiritual religions had either forgotten or misconstrued. The great Israelite prophets had reached a very exalted conception of God Who was not a merely tribal God—Jahwe of the early Israelitic conception, but a Creator and Sustainer of universal wisdom, justice and love. But the Jews had again and again relapsed into paganism and dragged their God repeatedly to a lower tribal level, making Him the God of a limited Chosen People, not much concerned with the rest of mankind or the universe in general. Jesus, the last of the great Hebrew Prophets, tried to pull them up once again to make them believe in a God Who demanded universal love and purity of the spirit in preference to burnt offerings of animals and external observances of burden-

some laws, regulations and rituals. The Jews paid no heed to him, and his paganised followers involved his simple and sweet message, about a loving God Who demanded a loving humanity, into endless metaphysical disputes about the relation of Jesus to God. The early Christian teachers relegated to the background the teaching of Jesus to lead holy lives; they began to quarrel with each other, and persecuted each other, about useless metaphysical differences concerning God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Leaving aside the urgent task of ushering in the kingdom of God on this earth by preaching and practising universal love, the great Church Fathers like Tertullian and Cyprian in North Africa, and Clement and Origen in Alexandria, spent their major efforts in clarifying and defining the still inchoate doctrines concerning the relation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and lack of agreement among them gave scope to acrimonious disputes. Arius, a learned presbyter of Alexandria, differed with his bishop on the question of whether Christ was a finite or an eternal being. Arius held that Christ, even as the Logos, was a created being; he was made like other creatures out of nothing, and so he could not be eternal; neither could he be of the same substance as God. The Son, he argued, had a beginning while God was without beginning. Arius's bishop took issue with him, asserting that the Son was eternal, uncreated, and of like essence with God. This dispute, which generated great heat, revolved round the question whether Jesus was of the same substance (*homoousios*) with God the Father, or of like substance (*homoiousios*). The quarrel was further complicated by the question whether the Virgin Mary was to be called the "Mother of God". Nestorius, the chief spokesman of the Antiochians, caused rioting among the monks of Constantinople, where he became bishop, when he preached a sermon against calling Mary the "Mother of God". He declared that she did not bear a "deity"; she bore "a man, the organ of deity". Cyril, bishop

of Alexandria, now joined the fray on the other side. He admitted that Christ's humanity possessed body, rational soul, and spirit, but it was without personality; the Logos was its personality.

We had to refer to this Hellenistic and pagan rigmarole about the nature of God and his beloved Messenger Jesus, to show in what a quagmire the original religion of Christ had fallen, which Muhammad was commanded to rescue, and to put the relationship of God and Man again in proper perspective. As we have said above, the first attribute of God, the One Creator of the Universe, is *Rabb*, the Nourisher and Developer, clearly referring to the evolutionary aspect of God's creation. God is not resting in eternal inactivity after having created the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain. As He is not merely a Creator so is He not merely a Lord and Master. Nor would the symbol of Fatherhood be appropriate to describe Him, as patriarchal society visualised Him. One might with preference call Him "Mother" because in creativeness, love and care, the function of the mother is much more vital than that of the father which is comparatively casual and secondary. These first verses of the Qur'ānic revelation avoid any such symbols about God. We have seen how much confusion the symbols of Fatherhood and Sonhood caused in the minds of the misguided followers of Jesus. Having called God a Universal Creator, Sustainer and Developer of the whole of creation, the verses mention the physical and biological beginning of man from a mere lump of embryonic flesh. Then it further characterises *Rabb* as *Akram* (the Most Generous), who takes care of His creation with loving kindness. The next words signify that this lump of flesh was made to evolve into a being endowed with the capacity of knowledge, which increases progressively from age to age because of the transmission of knowledge and experience through the instrumentality of the pen. The last verse points to the gift of knowledge of a nature to which man could not

have attained merely by means of sense-experience and ratiocination. Because it was a revealed verse it points to special revelation as a source of knowledge of those realities, purposes and goals of life which mere knowledge of natural phenomena and their causation could not have imparted. We see how pregnant with meaning these verses are about the nature of both God and Man, stating also in very few words the course of human evolution in knowledge from natural and rational sources to divinely inspired and revealed knowledge to supplement the uncertainty and fragmentariness of man's contact with Reality. The verses also signify that man's rational and natural knowledge is also a thing of great value and is the gift of a noble and generous Creator, Guide and Sustainer. In a world where literacy was the monopoly of a very small privileged minority, the Qur'an encouraged universal literacy by pointing to the pen as the great instrument of knowledge. On account of the value of knowledge through the pen the followers of Muhammad became the most literate of all contemporary nations within a very short time. The divinely granted knowledge of Muhammad himself was not based on books; he was the non-literate prophet of an illiterate nation. For himself his bookless knowledge was enough, but for common humanity books and writing are indispensable necessities of culture and civilised life. After the Battle of Badr—the first which the small fraternity of Muslims fought for their survival and which, in fact, laid the foundations of security for them—the Prophet said that whosoever among the prisoners of war would teach reading and writing to the Muslim children would be deemed to have paid his ransom.

The Prophet's Response to the Call. The Sūrah we have been considering was the first Sūrah revealed to the Prophet in the contemplative solitude of the Cave of Hirā' which had been his retreat off and on for a considerable period. The visual and auditory experience through which this exquisite revelation was mediated

was something so unexpected and novel that he suffered much psycho-physical disturbance. It was not the content of the revelation, which could have been nothing but a source of consolation and joy for a man who had been an earnest seeker of such truths. But the cataclysmic nature of the new vision shook him to the roots of his being.

It is recorded that sometime before the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed, the Angel of God had appeared to the Prophet in 'the Cave of Hirā', bringing him the tidings that God had chosen him to deliver His message to mankind. This was a terrifying experience. The Prophet regarded the Angel as an awful apparition, so that his psycho-physical disturbance after the event was natural. Experiences of a similar nature have been related in the lives of some of the great prophets of Israel, but nothing of this kind had happened to him before, and at the outset he did not know what to make of it. It is reliably reported that he went back home in great distress of mind and body, and related to his devoted wife Khadijah what had happened. Who knows the character of a man more accurately and intimately than an intelligent and sympathetic wife? Khadijah wrapped up his trembling form, and soothed him by saying that he had no cause to fear, for he was a noble and true man who was kind to everyone, helpful to the afflicted and charitable to the needy. It is also related that Waraqah, a cousin of his wife Khadijah, who was well versed in the Old and New Testaments, and knew that something similar had happened to many a prophet of God when commissioned to rise, teach and warn, assured the Holy Prophet that he had seen none else but the Angel that had come to Moses. Shibli has critically examined the authenticity of this report about the assurance extended by Waraqah, and discredited it on the basis of lack of evidence. But even if this report is admitted to be true, it should in no way be construed to be derogatory to the Holy

Prophet that his super normal experience should have been corroborated as genuinely prophetic by one well versed in prophetic tradition. Be that as it may, the first verses were revealed soon after the incident just recorded.

In this early stage the Prophet spoke of the great mission of his life to only a few trusted people. The first converts to Islam were Khadijah, his wife who had known him intimately for more than fifteen years; 'Alī, his young cousin, who was also his protege; Zaid, his emancipated slave; and Abū Bakr, who had been his sincere friend for a long time. Muḥammad knew that he was bound to face great opposition the moment he started denunciation of the gods of his people. He did not at once proclaim the Truth openly. For some time he retired to solitary places to pray. Once his uncle Abū Tālib found Muḥammad, accompanied by his own son 'Alī, praying in the compound of the Ka'bah, and asked what this new religion was. The Prophet replied: "It is the religion of my ancestor, Abraham." Abū Tālib said, "I cannot adopt this religion, but you may practise it without let or hindrance if you so desire, and I will see that no one obstructs you in your novel worship." This unobtrusive worship and quiet propagation of the new religion continued for about three years. The Prophet then received the Divine command to declare the Truth openly and start with his own relatives, and his own tribe. "So declare openly what thou art bidden" (xv. 94); "And warn thy nearest relations" (xxvi. 214).

Accordingly, he called men of the tribe of Quraish around him and ascended the low hillock of Ṣafā' to address them. He asked them whether they would believe him if he said that an enemy was advancing upon them from behind the hill. They replied that they would certainly believe him because they had always found him telling the truth. "Then I warn you," said the Prophet, "of a still greater calamity. What I said was only an illustration, but know that

Death is coming fast to overwhelm you. One day you will stand in the presence of God. I see the future as clearly as you see the present. Believe, before the wrath of God descends on you."

On hearing this the men of the Quraish were very indignant, particularly the Prophet's uncle *Abū Lahab*. On another occasion, instead of addressing them in public, he invited them to a meal at his own house to appeal to them sitting down together. The large family of 'Abdul Muṭṭalib gathered for dinner, not knowing the purpose behind the invitation. The uncles of Muhammad (Hamzah, *Abū Tālib* and 'Abbās) were present. The Prophet stood up after dinner and addressed them, saying: "I am bringing you a message that will give you religious truth and also worldly well-being. Who among you will be my helper in this cause?" The elderly uncles made no response, but the young 'Alī, foreshadowing the fortitude which made him for the rest of his life an invincible champion of Islam, stood up and said, "I am suffering from inflammation of the eyes, my legs are thin and weak, and I am the youngest in this whole group, but I will be with you." The worldly-wise elders could only smile at this phenomenon which appeared so ridiculous to them—a simple and quiet member of their family offering them well-being here and hereafter, and an ailing youngster offering him assistance to achieve his visionary purpose. They considered it a great joke and departed.

Early Opposition to Islam. When the number of believers came to about forty Muhammad ventured to proclaim his creed in the sacred Ka'bah itself. The unbelievers considered this an act of desecration and made a big row about it. The Prophet's foster brother *Hārith ibn Abī Hālah*, who was living in a house near

of Islam. Islam started spreading under the shadow of the sword, not of the believers, but of Islam's barbarous adversaries. For the idolatrous Quraish Islam was a matter of life and death because it threatened their well-entrenched vested interests. Custodianship of the Ka'bah had conferred on them not only religious honour and prestige, on account of which they called themselves the family of God, but secured for them the monetary benefits directly or indirectly accruing from this privileged position. The Ka'bah was the centre of Arab polytheism and idolatry. If Islam declared their gods to be mere fictions the whole edifice of religious and worldly gain would crumble. The Qur'anic revelation was later on to repeat the stories of prophets and reformers in the past to illustrate the historical fact that every messenger of God, preaching spiritual and moral regeneration, must invariably come up against the bitter opposition of the upper classes who feel that it is they, and not the poor toiling masses, who stand to lose if social justice were established and immoral luxuries banned. They think that all privileges belong to them; and if prophethood is also a special privilege it must be granted to aristocrats and not to a member of the poorer classes.

They say, if a scripture had to be revealed it should have been revealed to some aristocrat from the two cities (Mecca and Tā'if) (xliii. 31).

The conception of greatness among the Quraish was that a person was great who possessed great wealth and was a patriarch with a large progeny, particularly male descendants. Men like Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, 'Ās ibn Wā'il Sahmī and Abū Mas'ūd Thaqafī satisfied both these conditions. Over against them Muḥammad had neither wealth nor a number of sons and grandsons.

There was also another reason for their bitter hatred of Islam. The Quraish had begun to hate the

Christians because Abrahaḥ, the Christian viceroy in Yemen of the King of Abyssinia, had invaded Mecca with the express purpose of demolishing the Ka'bah. This would have destroyed the power and prestige of the Quraish, just as the Romans had tried to finish the religious and political power of the Jews by razing to the ground the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. As there was so much in common between Islam and Christianity (some modern Western writers have begun to characterise Islam as a Christian heresy, as Christianity might with equal justification be called a Jewish heresy), the Quraish thought that the Prophet was preaching Christianity and were, therefore, apprehensive. The Christian Romans and the Zoroastrian Persians were constantly at war with one another. When, during the time of the Prophet, the Romans were defeated by the Persians and lost some of their provinces, the Quraish were jubilant because of their rancour against the Christian invaders from Abyssinia. They considered the defeat of the Romans as foreshadowing the defeat of the rising power of Islam.

The Qur'ān is not a book of specific prophecies though the entire book may be taken as one long prophecy about the ultimate triumph of Islam against the infidel hordes, a prophecy put into the mouth of an individual without any worldly power and fulfilled to the letter before he departed from this world. But about specific events perhaps there is only one prophecy in the Qur'ān and that relates to the subsequent triumph of the Romans over the Persians after having suffered a great defeat. This prophecy too was fulfilled with exactness within the specified period. According to Arabic idiom the word *bida'* (بضع) is used for a number which is less than ten. The Romans defeated the Persians within that number of years. It is reported that when this verse was revealed the Muslims rejoiced at the prospect of the Roman triumph and Abū Bakr won a bet on it.

The Romans are vanquished in a near land, and they, after

being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years. Allah's is the Command before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice (xxx. 2-4).

A further cause of the bitter opposition to Muhammad was tribal rivalry between the two powerful clans of the Quraish, Banū Hāshim and Banū Umayyah. The Prophet belonged to the clan of Banū Hāshim which, after having gained a good deal of power and prestige under 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, had declined during the lifetime of the Prophet. On the other hand, Banū Umayyah had become wealthy and powerful under Ḥarb ibn Umayyah and his son Abū Sufyān. They became deadly foes of the Prophet and his creed which, if successful, would eclipse the Umayyads and raise the prestige of the Prophet's clan, the Hāshimites. Abū Sufyān was responsible for all the campaigns against the Muslims, with the solitary exception of the Battle of Badr. Then there were enemies from other tribes: men like Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah

in self-defence. The inertia of deeply ingrained habits and established customs is a powerfully resisting force. A reformation strikes at well-entrenched privileges also. The motive of opposition may, therefore, be economic, racial, tribal or national. If social justice is preached, the exploiters of the labour of others stand up to defend the *status quo*. If moral reform is inculcated, those living in sin and luxury are loth to put up with it. In the case of opposition to Islam and the Prophet all these factors combined to consolidate hostility. Adultery was not only common among the Arabs but their great poets sang with pride of their sexual exploits. Infanticide, chiefly of daughters, was not looked upon as a crime. Drinking and gambling were their favourite pastimes. Tribal raids, murder, loot and a generally predatory life made the common and approved pattern of existence. If Islam were accepted all this shall have to be discarded. Arabia had never submitted itself to any organised State or civilised regime. Life could be regulated within the tribe, but in inter-tribal relation there was neither morality nor law. Suppression of the tribal ego was not an easy task ; the brotherhood of all believers was an undreamt-of conception. Uprooting the evil propensities ingrained in the minds of the people since immemorial times required an extraordinary force on the part of the new faith to effect a complete revaluation of values. That is why the Arabian tribes opposed Islam tooth and nail. During all the long period of threat and persecution Islam continued to advance steadily by virtue of its own soul force.

People ignorant of the conditions prevailing in pre-Islamic Arabian society might ask : If Muhammad and Islam were considered so dangerous by the Meccans why did they not finish him and his few associates by killing them outright, as they had killed Hārith when he attempted to protect Muhammad in the courtyard of the Ka'bah ? Why did they suffer him to live on to spread more and more trouble ? Jesus had hardly

started his mission when the religious hypocrites against whom he spoke dragged him to be crucified. A believer in the Divine mission of the Prophet would answer simply that God, Who wanted his Truth to triumph through the instrumentality of Muḥammad even in his lifetime, saved him although so many wanted to kill him during the ten years of his prophet-hood that he spent in Mecca. However, among the mundane causes of his being spared is the structure of the society in which he lived. There was no organised State in Mecca that would impose the penalty of death on a man who denounced the religion of the State. Muḥammad had the good fortune of having been born in a place where there was no State and Government. Besides, the murder of a respectable citizen like him would have started a feud between powerful families, bringing about the killing of notable persons on both sides. High and low all were tortured and persecuted, but it was risky to kill anyone who belonged to a powerful tribe capable of wreaking vengeance. Persecution picked up specially those who had no powerful tribal backing. Men and women slaves were brutally tortured; descendants of foreigners and strangers, who accepted Islam, could be tortured or killed with impunity. The Quraish would catch hold of poor and helpless Muslims, lay them down on the hot and burning sandy ground under a scorching sun, and then put a very heavy stone on the chest of the victim, or cover him with burning sand. In other cases hot iron was applied to the skin. Khabbāb was treated like this. He was made to lie down on burning coal and a man stood on him so that he could not move. Long afterwards, he showed 'Umar his back which looked leprous because of this burning. He was a blacksmith by profession. A number of people, who owed him his unpaid wages, would say that he would receive payment if he repudiated Islam. Khabbāb would always reply, "No, never."

We will not rehearse the harrowing tales of torture

suffered by a large number of men and women at the hands of the idolatrous Quraish—tales which could be matched in cruelty only by the medieval Inquisition in Europe. As we have said, most of the early martyrs were slaves ; their strength of faith, tested by heart-rending ordeals, has seldom been equalled. Abū Bakr, whose friendship with the Prophet preceded the mission of Islam and whose devotion to a person and a cause forms one of the glorious chapters of early Islam, was a man of substantial means. His first noble use of wealth was the deliverance of these tortured slaves from the hands of diabolical tyrants, so that they could live in a free and human way. The unswerving loyalty and strength of faith of these poor and persecuted men and women have been appreciated even by some Western writers. Godfrey Higgins writes in his *Apology* :

It would be good for the Christians to remember that the teaching of Muhammad created a devotion to faith in his followers for which one would look in vain among the early followers of Jesus ; when Jesus was nailed on the Cross they ran away deserting him. Compare with them the followers of Muhammad who came to the assistance of the persecuted Prophet, and risked their lives in defending him till they made him triumph over all his enemies.

Emigration to Abyssinia. In these early years of helplessness, harassment and persecution it was impossible for the Muslims to practise their faith, or live in peace for the ordinary pursuits of life. The best course under such circumstances was migration to a place where they could live unmolested. Abyssinia was well known to the Arabs because of their trade relations, and they were aware of the nobility of its ruler, the Negus, who was reputed for his sense of justice. Even Abū Bakr was prepared to migrate to Abyssinia, but was probably held back by the Prophet. Among the eleven men and four women who migrated were some who were related to the Prophet and others who later on rendered great service to Islam. 'Uthmān with his

wife Ruqayyah, the daughter of the Prophet, went with this group. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, the well-known Companion of the Prophet, greatly respected for his juristic insight, was also one of the eleven. Luckily two merchant ships were about to leave the seaport, and these emigrants were taken on board for a nominal fare. The Quraish pursued them as the Israelites of Moses were pursued by the Pharaoh to prevent their escape, but by the time the pursuers reached the port, the ship had left. No one can blame the motive of those who, finding the conditions of life physically and morally intolerable, seek refuge elsewhere to live in freedom and peace. But there is another type of character, of men of exceptional devotion and iron will, who would prefer, despite persecution and harassment, to stick to a place where their spiritual guide lives, than seek peace in a distant asylum. Among men of this type was Bilāl the Mu'adhdhin, who had suffered extreme torture at the hands of his masters before he was rescued and emancipated by the generosity of Abū Bakr. He stayed back in Mecca where the soulful presence of the Prophet and men like Abū Bakr more than compensated for all kinds of discomfort and privation. To him later on was entrusted the important duty of calling the Faithful to daily prayers. The Prophet's love, verging on reverence, for him, equalled his own love for and devotion to the Prophet. Bilāl, the emancipated negro slave, is one of the great symbols of the equalitarian ideology of Islam whose chief mission was the substitution of racial distinctions with one universal brotherhood of faith rooted in the one universal God. It is reported that once the Prophet saw in a vision that he was entering paradise; he heard the footsteps of someone going ahead of him and was told that it was Bilāl. Islam demolished the deep-rooted racial and colour prejudices to such an extent that, when Bilāl desired to marry, the once proud and aristocratic Quraish offered their daughters to him.

The Meccan idolaters decided to pursue these emigrants even to Abyssinia. A deputation of some notables, including 'Abdullah ibn Rabī'ah and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (who after Islam conquered Egypt), went to Abyssinia with valuable presents for the Negus and his courtiers to persuade them to evict these fugitives from their land. They met the clergy first and requested their support in recapturing these miscreants who had disturbed their society by inventing a new religion. These deputationists were granted an audience by the Negus. The clergy as well as the courtiers supported their request, but the Negus could not be easily persuaded. He asked the Muslims what this new faith was, a faith which appeared to be antagonistic to Christianity as well as idolatry. The Muslims chose Ja'far, the brother of 'Ali as their spokesman. Ja'far spoke as follows :

O King ! we were an ignorant people, who worshipped idols, ate the carcasses of dead animals, practised immoralities, harassed our neighbours, tyrannised over our own brethren, the strong suppressing and exploiting the weak. In this deplorable condition a man arose among us, whose nobility, honesty and truthfulness were known to us; he taught us Islam which inculcated that we discard the worship of stones, speak the truth, avoid bloodshed, cease devouring the property of the orphans, be good to our neighbours, not scandalise chaste women. We were taught to offer prayers, keep fasts, and give Zakāt (prescribed tax on capital). We believed in this teacher, we discarded idolatrous polytheism and refrained from evil deeds. It is all this that has antagonised our people and turned them into our mortal enemies. They want to compel us to return to the infidelity that we have repudiated.

Having heard this speech, which is a resume of almost the whole of Islam, the Negus asked Ja'far to recite something that had been revealed to their Prophet. Ja'far appropriately recited a few verses of Sūrah Maryam, hearing which the Negus, realising how much there was common between the Bible and this new revelation, remarked that these were rays of light from one and the same lamp. Having been satis-

fied, he asked the deputationists to go back, for he had decided that the refugees should not be handed back to them.

Next day 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ made another attempt to discredit the Muslims. He presented himself before the King and suggested to him that he should question the Muslims regarding their belief about Jesus. He thought that if they denied that Jesus was the son of God, the Christian King would surely be displeased. Ja'far decided to say truthfully what they believed about Jesus, whatever the consequences. So he said, "We believe that Jesus is the servant of God, His Prophet and His word." Hearing this Negus picked up a straw, and remarked, "What you have said about Jesus is true; nothing as little as a straw could be added to it." Hearing this the patriarch present in the court was seen boiling with suppressed rage, but the Negus took no notice of him, and the delegation of the Quraish remained unsuccessful.

All these facts are recorded in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal. Ibn Hishām, the biographer of the Prophet, has also recorded them in detail. The authorities quoted by both are sound and unimpeachable. One of the authorities is Umm Salamah, who was one of these refugees, and who later on married the Prophet. This is a very unornamented account of a simple but important episode. In the questions and answers there is a succinct statement of Islam, and what is said about Jesus is nothing derogatory to him. The Christian Biblical term *Logos* (=Word), on which a large part of Christian philosophical theology is built, is also used in the Qur'ān for Jesus, though not in the Hellenistic connotation. But the maliciousness of some of the Western writers, imposing on the world as scholars of Arabic and Islamic history, knows no bounds. About the emigration to Abyssinia, Professor Margoliouth of Oxford makes a guess and invents speculatively an explanation, imputing a curious motive to the Prophet who advised these persecuted people to

migrate. His concoction runs as follows :

When Muhammad saw that he could not cope with the Quraish, he thought of the invasion of Kaaba by Abraha, the Christian King of Abyssinia, and decided to enter into conspiracy with the Negus, so that he may invade Mecca and help him to crush the Quraish. But on second thoughts he considered it to be risky because, if the Negus conquered Mecca and crushed the Quraish, what would Muhammad get out of it?

What an interesting reader of the mind of the Prophet! A man who starts with the idea of Muhammad being a schemer and an impostor from beginning to end, what else could he do but invent things and impute motives for actions about which he could not find a shred of authority. Such a man is on a par with the Pharisees who accused Jesus, before the Roman magistrate Pilate, of scheming to become King of the Jews.

Shi'b Abī Talib. While more Muslims were emigrating to Abyssinia, Islam was spreading slowly and steadily in Mecca. The Quraish did not know what to do about this growing peril. Threats, persecution and harassment of all kinds had failed to stem the tide. They offered the Prophet pelf, luxury and power, only if he would desist from reviling their gods. The deputation of the Meccan notables, however, received the reply that even if they could place the sun and the moon in his hands he would reject the offer rather than give up proclaiming the truth that he was commissioned to preach. Persuasion and persecution not having availed, the only effective weapon that they could think of, short of a general massacre (which was not possible under the social and tribal conditions of Mecoa) was a total social and economic boycott. The new plan was to push the entire Muslim community behind a barren hill, and to see to it that no food reached them, so that they were starved to death. All the tribes joined in this siege and social boycott, having entered into a written contract that no man should enter into any kind of relation with the family of

Hāshim; no trade with them should be allowed; no one should supply them with any articles of food until they surrendered Muhammad to be killed. The contract was drawn up and written by Mansūr ibn 'Ikrimah. The mountain pass to which they retreated was called Shi'b Abī Tālib. They could not be ousted from this besieged pass because it was a hereditary possession of the family of Hāshim. The siege continued for three long years. To keep body and soul together they were obliged to feed on leaves and grass. Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ relates that one day, when he was utterly famished, he happened to see a piece of old dried leather; he washed it clean, then roasted it, mixed it with water and ate it. Ibn Sa'd has related that when the children cried for hunger the Quraish gloatingly enjoyed the sound of their cries. Occasionally someone not so callous would have pity on them and send them some grain. The notorious Abū Jahl once tried to snatch away even this on the way, but was snubbed by a kind-hearted man.

The strength of their faith made them stand this long trial of three years with infinite patience. Not a single person showed any weakness, or made any attempt at compromise. At last some people, in whom the milk of human kindness had not been completely dried up, felt the terrible cruelty of this inhuman affair and, overcoming the resistance of the refractory enemies of Islam, raised the siege and tore up the contract. This happened in the tenth year of the Prophet's mission, which is also the year in which he had that great experience of a journey to heaven, which has been called *Mi'rāj* or Ascension. The lives of prophets and saints are replete with religious experiences, but this experience had such unique worth that it is recorded also in the Qur'ān. The nature of this experience has ever since been a subject of profound interest for theologians, mystics, philosophers, and even poets. We shall find occasion later to make an attempt to understand the significance of it. We

may observe here, however, that many legends grew up round this nucleus of an ineffable reality. A Spanish writer has tried to prove, by quoting parallel passages from Ibn 'Arabī and other Muslim writers on one side and from Dante's *Divine Comedy* on the other, that Dante took the main pattern of his work from these writers.

During this year, called the Year of Grief, soon after the termination of the three years' Meccan boycott, two great supports for the Prophet were withdrawn by the death of his devoted wife Khadījah and of his uncle Abū Tālib who had stood by him valiantly through all the phases of adversity and persecution. After the death of Abū Tālib and Khadījah the Quraish began to feel themselves freer to molest Muḥammad. Some wretch threw a basketful of dust on his head and face. The beloved daughter of the Prophet shed tears as she washed his head. The Prophet consoled her saying, "Don't cry, my child; God will certainly protect your father."

Journey to Tā'if. Having despaired of the Meccans, the Prophet thought that the inhabitants of the second great town, Tā'if, might be less refractory. So he went over to Tā'if to preach and persuade but, alas, to no avail. The most influential family there was that of 'Umair. The Prophet approached three influential brothers in this family. All the three began to ridicule and reproach him. One said, "What a curious prophet sent by God, who is bent on desecrating the Ka'bah!" (He meant that the Prophet was insulting the gods and idols of this holy temple of the Arabs.) The second brother said, "Could not God get hold of a better person than thyself for this high office of prophet-hood?" (He meant thereby to refer to someone rich in wealth and progeny.) The third one remarked. "It is useless to talk with you; for if you are truly a prophet, it would be discourteous to argue with you, and if you are an impostor it is not worth while to enter into a discussion with you." Not content with their

own abusive taunts, they incited the people in the streets to ridicule him and attack him as he went by. The Prophet had to pass between two rows of scoffers who pelted him with stones. When he dropped down bleeding they lifted him up and made him walk again repeating their abusive language and assaults. At last, the Prophet sought shelter in a vineyard whose owner, 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, happened to be a humane person. Rabi'ah ordered his slave 'Addas to offer a bunch of grapes to the persecuted man. The malicious Margoliouth, ever hostile critic of the Prophet, says that if Muhammad were wiser he should have realised the folly of attempting to go to Tā'if where he was bound to be insulted and assaulted, because the notables of this city were in constant contact with his influential adversaries of Mecca. What would such a stupid and callous writer say about Jesus subjected to a similar treatment, and yet courting persecution and even death, which he could have avoided if he had lacked moral courage and had refrained from calling the Pharisees hypocrites and a generation of vipers. Such critics try to teach worldly wisdom to great souls who, in disregard of persecution and even life itself, stand up and speak the Truth, facing the consequences of their spiritual courage. Sir William Muir, who is not always fond of crediting Muhammad with noble motives, is more fair in relating this incident. He says that it was the strength of the Prophet's faith, and conviction and self-confidence born of it, that undismayed by adverse experiences he ventured alone into a hostile town to propagate his faith.

Returning from Tā'if, the Prophet sought protection of Mut'im bin 'Adī, which Mut'im granted. Mut'im and his sons, fully armed, escorted the Prophet to the courtyard of the Ka'bah. Mut'im, who was riding a camel, proclaimed that he had taken Muhammad under his protection, so let everybody beware of injuring him. The Prophet said his prayers in the Haram under the shadow of the swords of these

protectors who, with drawn swords, then escorted him to his home. Mut'im was not a Muslim, but Arab chivalry is older than Islam. It was a point of honour, and a custom not to be violated, to protect anyone whom protection had been promised, even at great risk to the protector.

The Prophet Continues the Good Work. The Prophet continued to proclaim his mission wherever he found the opportunity. Numerous tribes from all quarters came to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage, and the Prophet utilised the occasion to approach them and preach the truth revealed to him. The notorious Abū Lahab followed him wherever he went, warning the people not to lend their ears to the man who had discarded the true faith of his ancestors and wanted to replace it with a false one. When the Prophet approached the tribe of Banū Zuhl, Abū Bakr accompanied him. Abū Bakr asked Mafrūq bin 'Amr, a member of this tribe, "Have you heard about the coming of a prophet? This is he." Mafrūq turned towards the Prophet and said, "O brother from among the Quraish! What is it that you teach?" The Prophet replied, "I teach that God is one and that I am his Messenger." Then he recited the following verses:

Say: Come! I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you—(remember) that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty—We provide for you and for them—and do not draw nigh indecencies, those of them which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except for the requirement of justice; this He has enjoined you with that you may understand. And do not come near the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his maturity; and give full measure and weight with justice—We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability; and when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative, and fulfil Allah's covenant; this He has enjoined upon you that you may be mindful (vi. 152-153).

Mafrūq and other chiefs of the tribe were greatly impressed. They praised the beauty of this teaching,

but hesitated to accept the new faith. They said, "We are under the protection of the Persian Emperor, Chosroes, and we have entered into a contract with him not to place ourselves under anyone else's influence. Besides, we shall be considered credulous if we discarded all of us the faith of our forefathers." The Prophet appreciated their plain-speaking and said, "God himself will help His faith."

When he approached the tribe of Banū 'Āmir, a member of that tribe, Ibn Farās, visualising the potential power of Muḥammad, thought that if he could be allied with the Prophet he could subdue the whole of Arabia. This man, like so many faithless power-seekers and politicians throughout the history of religion, considered religion only as an instrument of political power. He, therefore, asked the Prophet, "If we assist you in overcoming your enemies shall we, as a reward, inherit the kingdom after you?" The Prophet replied, "That rests with God." The man was disappointed and remarked, "This means that we make ourselves the target of a hostile Arabia, and when we triumph over the adversaries the kingdom may be handed over to others. What a rotten bargain! No, we are not for it."

As Muḥammad would not bend, the chiefs of the Quraish made all attempts to break him. Short of murdering him all means were adopted to harass and torture him. They would spread thorns on his way, or ridicule him when they found him offering prayers. Once when he prostrated himself before God, the heavy and dirty stomach of a killed camel was placed on his back. At another time they threw a cloth round his neck and twisted it, almost strangling him. Children in the street pursued him with abuse calling him a madman and a sorcerer.

How did Muḥammad react to all this? When he was asked by his exasperated followers to curse these persecuting infidels, he replied that God had not sent him to curse human beings. In Ta'if, when he was staggering from assaults and bleeding, he said what

Jesus is reported to have said on the Cross, "O God, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The demand to curse the persecutors was repeatedly made by irritated followers. Once the Prophet was so indignant at the loss of patience of his followers that his face reddened, and he said, "Men of God before you showed patience and perseverance when they were being sawn alive from head to foot. They remained firm in their faith, and never refrained from the performance of their duty. Be patient and wait; God will complete his work, and peace shall reign from one end (of the Peninsula) to the other. A camel-rider shall travel from San'a to Hadramawt safe and unmolested, feeling no fear in his mind except the fear of God."

This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in his own lifetime. In that state of helplessness, who could have uttered such a prophecy except a man whom the Ruler of all Life had granted firm faith and the vision and confidence that truth shall triumph ultimately, a man whom God had chosen to fulfil His purpose.

4

MIGRATION

AS in a drowning ship the captain is the last to leave after seeing to it that every one of the passengers has been helped to whatever position of safety is possible, so the Prophet stayed on in Mecca till most of the Muslims had escaped from the tyranny of the Meccan idolaters. It was the thirteenth year of his prophetic mission when he said to his bosom friend Abū Bakr, who too had not left Mecca, that he had now received the Divine command to leave Mecca, and shift to Medina. *Bukhārī* has given a graphic account of the events on the eve of his departure and the perilous journey to Medina. The Meccans realising that Muhammad's influence was spreading and that he was gathering a great following elsewhere, from which place he could threaten them with vengeance, decided after long hesitation to put an end to his life in a manner that would entail no dangerous consequences. They convened a large and representative assembly in their *Dār-un-Nadwah* consisting of heads of all influential families, clans and tribes. Various proposals were put forward and discussed. One suggestion was to put Muhammad in chains and shut him up in a house; another proposal was to exile him and get rid of the whole nuisance. Abu Jahl, the venomous enemy of the Prophet and Islam, considered these modes of handling such an insufferable culprit as too soft and lenient. He thought that Muhammad had escaped being killed hitherto simply because of the risk of tribal feud and vendetta. This risk could be avoided if the Quraish chose one man from each clan and

then all of them together set upon Muhammad and killed him, thereby distributing blood vengeance over all the clans against whom, singlehanded, Banū Hāshim would be powerless. Everyone agreed to this. On the night previous to the day on which the Prophet had planned to leave, his house was surrounded by the assassins. Considering their intended victim to be now secure in their grip, they did not rush into the house. They decided to wait for him outside till he came out of the house in the morning. The Prophet asked 'Alī to sleep that night in his (the Prophet's) bed to give the impression to the peeping assassins that Muhammad was sleeping there.

The Meccans, even though religiously hostile, treated Muhammad's honesty so much that some of them had given their money and valuables to him for custody. The Prophet instructed 'Alī to return all these to their owners, for he would not violate the trust even of an enemy under the worst circumstances.

Abū Bakr had four strong and fast-footed dromedaries fed and strengthened for an emergency like this. He presented one of them to the Prophet, but the Prophet would not accept it as a gift and insisted on paying the price, and Abū Bakr had to yield. Abū Bakr's daughter, Asmā', prepared provisions for about three days, and tied them with a piece of cloth torn from her own belt.

In a part of the night when the assassins had surrounded the Prophet's house they providentially dozed off for a while, which afforded an opportunity to the Prophet to slip away from under their noses. He first went to the Ka'bah and addressing Mecca said : "O city of Mecca ! thou art dearer to me than any other place in the world, but thy sons don't let me live here." After that, accompanied by Abū Bakr, he left Mecca and his first halt was a cave in the hill of Thaur. They stayed in this cave for three days drinking goat's milk brought by Abū Bakr's slave or, as Ibn Hishām has said, eating food supplied by Asmā'.

When the assassins made ready in the morning to put an end to Muḥammad's life they were exasperated to find 'Alī sleeping in the bed. They caught hold of him, arrested him for a while and, subsequently, let him off. Then they hastened in pursuit of Muḥammad, and almost overtook him. There are legends about how the Prophet and Abū Bakr were saved from being captured—that God made a thorny bush grow on the mouth of the cave all of a sudden, that two pigeons came and made their nests at the entrance to the cave, laying eggs therein. All these are tales. The simple fact is that the pursuers providentially missed them, not suspecting to find them in that cave. On one occasion the pursuers came almost upon them. Then Abū Bakr said to the Prophet that their enemies were so near that if they looked down a little they could see the fugitives and capture them. The Prophet, however, reassuring him, said: "Don't be upset; God is with us" (The Qur'ān, ix. 40).

The Quraish had announced a reward of one hundred camels to anybody who would capture either Muḥammad or Abū Bakr. An Arab chieftain, Surāqah ibn Ju'sham, riding a horse, pursued them to win this big reward. Surāqah overtook them, but as he drew near, his horse stumbled and he fell down. He drew arrows from his quiver to consult destiny, as was the practice of the Arabs, some arrows marked with positive, others with negative, signs or a blank. He wanted to know whether he should attack or not; fate answered him with a negative, but a hundred camels still tempted him to disregard the prohibition. He rode the horse again and tried to advance. This time the horse's legs stuck deep into loose sand. He consulted his arrows again but received the same negative answer. These two accidents and the omen-hunting combined to make him lose heart. Now he was convinced that there was something supernatural about how things were happening. He approached the Prophet for forgiveness and told him about the reward offered by the

Quraish. Surāqah requested the Prophet to give him a written promise of security for the future. Abū Bakr's literate slave 'Āmir wrote it for him on a piece of parchment. There is nothing legendary about this because it is reliably reported by good authorities, and Surāqah himself lived very many years after this event to relate the facts to hundreds of people. How a well-armed pursuer, driven by greed, should succumb before the soul force of an exceptionally powerful spirit, and lose all power to strike, comes about in the case of so many people, and is recorded in so many instances, that even for modern psychology there is nothing unbelievable about such phenomena. Much later than this event the Prophet saw in a vision this same Surāqah wearing the precious bangles of Chosroes, the Emperor of Persia. At that time a literal interpretation of this vision was inconceivable, but later on, in the time of the second Khalifah 'Umar, when Persia was conquered and the treasures of Chosroes were brought to Medina, 'Umar picked up the bangles of Chosroes and asked Surāqah to wear them.

When the Prophet and Abū Bakr were still on the way, Zubair, who was returning from Syria, with merchandise, met them by chance and presented them with some very good cloth which was gratefully accepted under the circumstances.

5

ARRIVAL AT MEDINA

THE news had already reached Medina that the Prophet was on his way to the town. The whole town was astir, eagerly awaiting his arrival. People would go out of the town some distance every day in anticipation of meeting him. At last one day a Jew, looking out from his fort, saw him arriving, and guessing that it was the person whom they were expecting, said to the people, "There is the man whom you are expecting." The shout of "Allāh Akbar" (God is Great) resounded through the whole town.

The Prophet did not hurry to enter the town of Medina, but stopped for a number of days in a suburb three miles out, called Qubā'. Here many families of the Muslims, whom we shall now call by their historical and honoured name, Ansār (Helpers), were settled. The family of 'Amr ibn 'Auf was the most distinguished, and the head of the family at this time was Kulthūm. The Prophet accepted the hospitality of Kulthūm and stopped with him. Some notable Companions of the Prophet, who had arrived in Medina much earlier, were also guests of Kulthūm.

The Prophet's mission of life was to make the people prayerful, so as to establish communion with their Beneficent Creator, and to exalt and purify their souls through this communion. The very first thing, therefore, which he thought of doing was to erect a mosque. In all probability it is this mosque which is referred to in the following verse of the Qur'ān : "Certainly a mosque founded on piety" (xi. 108).

The Prophet joined the labourers in the building

of this mosque. When he was seen carrying heavy stones on his back bent under the weight, his devotees would try to relieve him and shift the stones to their own back. He would yield to their request, but immediately go and lift another stone on his back. Among these labourers of love was a poet, 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah, who improvised rhymes to lift and carry stones rhythmically. The Prophet also kept time with them and recited :

افلح من يعالج المساجداً و يقرء القرآن قائماً و قاعداً
و لا يبيت الليل عنه راقداً

Successful is he who builds a mosque,
And recites the Qur'ān, sitting and standing,
And keeps awake in the night (praying).

The Prophet's stay in Qubā', the building there of the first mosque in the world, and the holding of the first congregational prayers, was considered such a momentous event that early recorders have given the exact date of it: 8 Rabī'-ul-Awwal, in the thirteenth year of the Prophetic mission. Mūsā Khwārizmī has specified it further by giving corresponding Persian and Roman dates as well. The astronomers quoted by the historian Ya'qūbī have also given the position of the sun, the moon and the planets on that date which inaugurated a new spiritual era in the world. After fourteen days the Prophet moved towards Medina and, for the first time, held Friday congregational prayers and delivered the first sermon in his life. As he proceeded through the town, the streets were lined with welcoming and jubilant people, men and women, young and old, everyone making an offer of his own house and hospitality. Women on the roofs of their houses and balconies began to chant:

طلع البدر علينا من ثنيات الوداع
و جب الشكر علينا ما دعاه الله داع

The full moon has risen on us
From above the hills of Widā' ;

Gratitude is binding on us,
As long as praying people pray.

Little girls were singing:

نَحْنُ جَوَارُ مِنْ بَنِي النَّجَارِ يَا حَبْدَا بَنِي مَنْ جَارٍ

We are the daughters of the family of Najjār;
What a fine neighbour we have in Muḥammad!

The Prophet smiled at these little, happy girls, and asked them, "Do you like me?" They said, "Yes, we do," and he replied, "I too like you."

Now the question was where to put up and whose hospitality to accept. Everyone who had a house desired to have the privilege of being host to the Prophet: how to prefer one to the other? We have two different accounts of how the matter was decided. According to early biographers, the Prophet, instead of making the choice himself, just let his dromedary go. He stayed in the house where God made the animal stop. But Muslim and Bukhārī both are of the view that Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī, whom the Prophet chose as host, belonged to the tribe of Banū Najjār. The Prophet said, "Banū Najjār shall be my hosts, because they are maternal unless of my grandfather 'Abdul Muṭṭalib.'" The house of Abū Ayyūb was a two-storeyed house, and he offered the Prophet the upper storey, but the Prophet preferred the ground floor for the convenience of visitors. Twice a day the family would send whatever meals they prepared first to the Prophet and then, after the Prophet had eaten, ate the remnants. We know from numerous accounts of the Prophet's domestic life that with respect to food he was satisfied with very little, and could go without any food for days together. So that he could hardly have taxed this hospitality, and returned most of the food after taking a few morsels. Abū Ayyūb noted the part of the dish where the Prophet had dipped his fingers and then, sentimentally, dipped his own fingers there. His devotion to the Prophet was such that once a jar

of water broke on the upper floor and, fearing that water would trickle down to the ground floor, he picked up the only quilt that he had and spread it quickly, so that it should absorb all the water. The Prophet stayed in Abū Ayyūb's house for seven months. As in Qubā', so now in Medina, his first and primary consideration was to build a house of worship which should serve also as an assembly hall for the Muslims, because in the comprehensive concept of worship in Islam the rational and just settlement of human relations is also included. A Muslim place of worship needs no altars for the sacrifice of animals, or other impressive paraphernalia, like pictures, figures, candles, incense and huge musical organs. Islam withdrew all such aesthetical and ritualistic supports from the act of a direct communion with one's Creator and Sustainer. Prayer in Islam is meant to purify the worshipper's relation with both God and Man; there is no dichotomy of the spiritual and the secular in this religion which derives the unity of humanity, and the unity of all existence, as a corollary from the unity of God. The mosque originally was temple and parliament welded into one; vital problems of State and society were discussed and settled in the spiritual atmosphere surcharged with prayer. For the purpose of praying to God a mosque is not a necessity, as the Prophet said, "One of the distinguishing features of Islam is that its worship is not bound up with temples and altars; God has made the whole earth a sacred place of worship for us." Only for congregational advantages are sheltered buildings needed.

The Prophet's Mosque is now one of the most magnificent places of worship in the world; the present monumental structure was raised by the Ottoman Sultāns. The original structure was built by the Prophet, himself working as a common labourer as he had done when he built the mosque at Qubā'. The Medina mosque, the second to be built by the Prophet's own hands, was a structure of unbaked brick, pillared with the

trunks of date-palms and thatched with palm leaves. One wonders if the present magnificent edifice, with its great artistic and architectural beauty and sublimity, could ever create that original atmosphere of creative spirituality which the thatched structure of clay and palms possessed. It happens that in the case of every religion genuine spirituality is in inverse proportion to material magnificence. The great Muslim poet Iqbal visualises God as saying, "I disdain your marble structures set up for worship; give Me again a prayer-house of clay."

Until the Medina mosque was built, a cattleyard was used for prayers. The plot of ground where the mosque was proposed to be built contained some graves and a few date-palms, belonging to the clan of Najjār. The Prophet offered to purchase this plot from them, but they said they would receive payment, not from the Prophet, but from God Who was to be worshipped there. The owners of this plot at the time were two orphan children. They too would not accept the price and desired to make a present of it, but the Prophet, the lifelong protector of the rights of orphans, insisted on payment, and his host Abū Ayyūb paid the price on his behalf. As the Prophet was working as a labourer to build the mosque he was reciting an improvised rhyme:

اللهم لا خير الا خير الامارة
فَا غفِرْ ا لِا نْصَارَ وَالْمَهَاجِرَةَ

O God, there is no success but the success of the hereafter;
Bless and forgive the Helpers and the Emigrants.

The floor was for a long time an unpaved floor which, after a rain, quickly turned into mud. Once the Prophet observed that people brought pebbles with them to avoid sitting on a drenched floor and decided to pave the floor with pebbles. He retained this simple way of life up to the end. Even when he had become the virtual ruler of all Arabia, his rooms adjoining the mosque continued to be small closets of clay with no furniture and no lamps. It is said that power cor-

rupts; and it is generally true about weak mortals, who very soon get intoxicated with power and, forgetting their ideals, succumb to the lure of luxuries. But here is the supreme example of a man who, even when he controlled a treasury, would not spend a penny out of it for supply of necessary personal conveniences either for himself or for his family, an example strictly followed by his four immediate successors, and which continued till the *Khilāfat* was converted into a monarchy, and the original simplicity of living was lost to Islamic society.

Even when the mosque had been built, congregational prayers were not held at the prescribed time, because there was no means of gathering people at definite hours. The Prophet, therefore, invited suggestions from the Companions. One proposal was that some individual might be entrusted with the duty of going round and collecting the people at appointed hours, but this was felt to be inconvenient and impracticable. Someone else suggested that a standard be raised high at prayer times, so that people far and near might know that they were being called to prayers. Others mentioned the blowing of horns, or the tolling of bells as they do in Christian churches. 'Umar suggested that the best method would be that a crier (*Mu'adhdhin*) with a high-pitched voice should give the call by proclaiming aloud the creed of Islam which could be heard at a distance. This, he said, would serve the double purpose of repeating and propagating the creed and calling the worshippers to prayer. 'Umar's proposal was finally approved and Bilāl, the emancipated negro slave, was called upon to perform this duty. The choice of Bilāl was a symbolic act inasmuch as the creed of Islam, which taught the universal brotherhood of man and sought to obliterate the feeling of racial superiority or inferiority, was to be announced by an emancipated negro slave. This is the positive contribution of Islam towards the affirmation of fundamental human rights. There are non-

Muslim nations in which slaves have been politically emancipated but, socially, they continue to live as pariahs, like the untouchables of Hindu society. In the U.S.A., for instance, the negro may not pray together with the white man in the same place of worship where, theoretically, sermons are preached on the brotherhood of man. In the Muslim mosques the poorest of worshippers have always stood shoulder to shoulder with kings and lords and magnates. Genuine brotherhood is something not only to be preached, but also to be practised in day-to-day relations with others. A person who does not possess this sentiment and does not cultivate it in practice is devoid of any real sense of religion. How truly has it been observed in the Christian Gospel: "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John, iv, 20). One might very well ask: Have apartheid clergymen in the Union of South Africa, or Christian supporters of racial segregation in the southern states of U.S.A., read and understood this gospel, or can they without compunction repeat it in their exclusively white churches?

After the mosque had been built, and the duty of announcing the creed to call the worshippers properly allocated, the next important task for the Prophet was to cultivate among the Companions a feeling of brotherhood. He never called the people who believed in him, and assisted him in the common, glorious cause, his "followers"; they were always referred to as his "Companions". "Companions" (*Ashāb*) has become a technical term when we talk of the Muslim associates of the Prophet. He would not let them rise when he came upon them and, when walking in their company, he would never walk a step ahead of the rest.

Now was the opportunity to test the sentiment of brotherhood of the new converts to Islam. The amicable way in which they demonstrated it is one of the highlights of Islam. The Emigrants who had come to Medina were people of all classes. There were some who

were well-to-do in their home town, and there were people of small means, or even destitutes. They had either been driven away from their homes, or had come voluntarily, but few could bring with them money or other valuables ; most came empty-handed and had no means of livelihood. We know that the problem of refugees arose in many countries as a result of two devastating world wars. Millions of people were driven from their own countries to seek shelter in other lands. The governments of the countries concerned tried to rehabilitate them with varying degrees of success. But what Muhammad did in such a predicament has no parallel in history. He gathered together the Emigrants and the Helpers and proposed to them that members of one group should enter into a compact of brotherhood with members of the other group. Muhammad's attitude towards individual charity was twofold. On the one hand he exhorted people to be charitable and to help the needy and the poor; and, on the other hand, he wanted even needy individuals to refrain from accepting private charity which is likely to degrade one who accepts it, because thereby he tends to lose his self-respect or, according to the Chinese idiom, he "loses" his "face". There is a saying of the Prophet which corroborates the meaning of the Chinese idiom. The Prophet perceived in a symbolic vision that on the Day of Judgment, people inured to begging in this life had no flesh on their faces : he saw them actually as having "lost" their "faces," for, whenever a man begs, his face shrinks a little in entreaty. The Prophet, who had a great sympathetic imagination about human sentiments, did not want Emigrant Muslims to live on the charity of the Helpers. That would have made the Helpers feel superior, and the Emigrants to feel inferior, being dependent on the goodwill and money of the Helpers. So he made the Emigrants and Helpers enter into bonds of brotherhood even stronger than the bonds that normally bind two real brothers. Among real brothers one often sees jeal-

ousies and quarrels about property and inheritance, and they may even be seen in the law-courts contesting each other's claims. Sometimes one brother is very rich and the other very poor, but the rich brother living in prosperity and luxury has hardly any feeling for the poverty of the less fortunate brother. In the feudal system of inheritance, according to the law of primogeniture [which Islam abolished], the eldest brother inherited the whole estate, leaving the others to shift for themselves. But the brotherhood that Muhammad established among the Emigrants and the Ansār was based on absolute equality. The Helper volunteered to share everything he possessed in equal quantity with the Emigrant who became his brother. The pairs were proposed by the Prophet himself on the basis of compatibility, or in consideration of the one being complementary to the other in various respects. The feeling of giving and receiving of charity was thereby wiped out. The Ansār offered half of their cultivable lands to the Emigrants but that would not suit the latter, who were mostly traders not used to cultivation. It was, therefore, agreed that the lands should continue to be cultivated by the Ansār but half the produce should be handed over to the Emigrant brothers. This bond remained for a while, even legally, stronger than the bond of blood-relationship. When an Ansārī died his Emigrant brother inherited from him in preference to his blood-relatives. It was long after this, when conditions became normal and social and economic life was stabilised, that natural heirs and blood-relatives were given priority, and their shares were fixed according to their nearness or remoteness or other considerations of a socio-economic nature pertaining to that state of culture.

The shares thus fixed are generally believed by a large majority of Muslims to be the final law of Islam, and valid for all times, irrespective of the changing structure of family life and basically altered economic patterns. But, in a liberal reconstruction of Muslim

jurisprudence it would be legitimate to adopt a new pattern by adaptation to fundamentally different circumstances. Changing the rules of inheritance in the case of the Emigrants and the Helpers points to the variability of the rules of inheritance. It is a generally accepted principle of Muslim jurisprudence that change of circumstances justifies the modification of rules. The following verse refers to the first condition of the Emigrants and the Helpers :

Surely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and their souls, and those who gave shelter and helped—these are guardians of each other (viii. 72).

After the Battle of Badr when the Emigrants stood on their own legs and needed no fraternal generosity in the matter of inheritance on the part of the Helpers, it was decreed that natural heirs related by blood have a preference over others :

And (as for) those who believed afterwards and fled and

of them cannot be stretched on one Procrustean bed of rigid legislation. Such rigidity would mean that man is made for law, not law for man—which certainly does not accord with the spirit of Islam.

The Prophet's own example, and his spirit of self-sacrifice, infused such disregard of self among the *Ansār* that even where the Emigrants were settled on other lands the Helpers insisted that they would continue to give them their share of the *Ansār* orchards. The self-sacrifice of the *Ansār* was matched by the dignity and self-respect of the Emigrants. They had, in their initial helplessness, accepted only what was indispensable for sheer existence. There were efficient and self-confident men like 'Abdur Rahmān bin 'Auf whose partner-brother offered him half of all his assets, but he declined with thanks, asking only to be shown the way to the market where he could study the conditions of trade and make a start. He started with buying and selling butter and cheese. Within a few days he had capital enough to marry and support a family. He was such an efficient and trusted trader that his assets multiplied rapidly to the extent that his merchandise was at last carried by 700 camels. Some Emigrants opened shops. Abū Bakr dealt in textiles up to the day when he was elected as the first President of the Islamic Republic. On the day after his appointment he was seen carrying cloth for sale. When he was told to give up trade, he replied, "But I have to make a living." He did not imagine that the duties of *Khilāfat* could carry any wages. He put his case before other Companions of the Prophet who advised him to accept a subsistence allowance that could cover the bare necessities of himself and his family, the simplest of food and two pairs of clothes for summer and winter. Such was the first successor of Muhammad, an image of the Prophet himself in simplicity, sincerity and self-sacrifice. 'Umar, too, who succeeded Abū Bakr, became a trader and prospered, needing no one's assistance. As a *Khalīfah* he expressed the view which

should serve as an ideal for the president of all republics who consider their post as a sacred trust, that "the head of a State ought to be like a guardian of orphans ; he should manage their property and look after their well-being without any remuneration, if he is a man of independent means ; if not, he should receive only a subsistence allowance as wages." He acted up to this principle scrupulously even when he had greater power than the Chosroes and the Caesar. It was the example and spirit of the Prophet on which he moulded his character, conduct and outlook.

When the Emigrants felt properly rehabilitated, they gave back to their *Ansār* brothers all that they had received. A large majority of these early Muslims beautifully synthesised their religious life with material activities because Islam essentially was such a synthesis. There were a few, however, who devoted themselves to the learning and teaching of Islam, and their complete absorption in this work left no time for them to earn a living. They were bachelor students who also worked as missionaries to teach and propagate Islam in distant places. They were not like the ascetics of other religions, because asceticism was definitely banned by Islam, but had voluntarily adopted a life of poverty to devote themselves without distraction to religious learning. There was a covered platform (*Suffah*, from which the English word *sofa* is derived) adjacent to the mosque where they lived as well as learnt. They began to be called the *Ashāb al-Suffah*. There was no regular provision for their maintenance but they desisted from begging their bread because begging was greatly disapproved by the Prophet. Christian monks and Buddhistic Bhikshus with their begging bowls could not develop within the correct Islamic tradition. These bachelor students were off and on fed by charitable Muslims, and the Prophet himself, who lived like them in voluntary poverty, invited them to share food sent to him. But it was customary with them that a batch from among them

would go and gather fuel in the forest, sell it in the market and, with the proceeds, buy food for the whole group. They could live like this only as bachelors. When any of them married he went out of the group. They lived in such poverty that most of them had only one sheet of cloth which they wrapped about their body. Sometimes, even the minimum of food was not available for days together and they felt so famished and weak that they would collapse while standing for prayers. Seeing them in this condition, some people thought that they were demented. *Abū Hurairah*, a member of this group, has related more sayings and doings of the Prophet than any other narrator. He was enabled to do this because of his single-minded devotion to and constant presence with the Prophet. He lost no opportunity to be with the Prophet, so much so that the Prophet once politely said to him, "O *Abū Hurairah*! pay visits intermittently, because intervals of absence increase love." When, after the death of the Prophet, people found him reporting about the Prophet much more than others and asked him the reason, he replied: "I preferred to be with the Prophet when the others were away in the market for trade."

The Prophet's family lived very often on the verge of starvation like the *Ashāb al-Suffah*, because the Prophet would not let himself or his family enjoy any privileges denied to others. His dear daughter *Fātimah*, after her marriage to 'Alī, had no help in her poor household. She did the entire domestic drudgery single-handed, and that drudgery included carrying of water in heavy skins, suspended by straps round her neck and chest, and grinding her wheat or barley on handmills which made her hands raw and blue. This dear daughter of a man, whom hundreds of persons would have been delighted to serve personally, requested the father to give her a maid for help. The Prophet replied, "Dear daughter, I cannot grant you the help while I see this group of the *Ashāb al-Suffah* leading a life of dire poverty. Neither *Muhammad*, nor his

daughter, is entitled to any special ease or comfort."

The Jews of Medina. The pre-Islamic name of Medina was Yathrib. When the Prophet settled here, the city began to be called Madīnat-un-Nabī, the city of the Prophet, and later on, shortened by use, was called Madīnah. This place and its surrounding territory had in it a large number of Jews, who had most probably settled here when the Romans devastated their homeland. In this territory the Jews had built a series of forts. They were most prosperous and, sometime before the Hijrah, had enjoyed great influence and power. Most of the Arab population in this territory appears to have migrated from Yemen after the great floods in the south. These people were descendants of Aus and Khazraj, two brothers, after whom the two tribes were named. The Arabs had remained aloof from the Jews for some time but, ultimately, finding the Jews possessed of considerable power and influence, they had become allies of the Jews under a contract of mutual help.

But when the Arabs began to increase in number, the Jews felt the necessity of dominating over them and keeping them suppressed as a helpless and dependent community ; the contract of alliance on equal terms was, therefore, renounced by the Jews. They began to behave as feudal lords over the Arabs and their chiefs instituted that nefarious custom of Western feudalism—when the serf married, the bride had to spend the first night in the bed-chamber of the feudal lord. When a Jewish lord of the name of Fityūn demanded this on the marriage of a sister of an Arab, Mālik bin al-'Ajlān, the sister stripped herself naked before the brother. When the brother upbraided her for this shameless act, she replied that what was going to happen the next day was going to be much worse. Hearing this, Mālik decided to stop the shameless custom by killing Fityūn. Dressed as a woman companion, he accompanied his sister to the chamber of Fityūn, and killed him. After the murder he fled to a part of Syria

under the dominion of the Ghassānids, at the time ruled by Abū Jabalah. This ruler decided to invade the Jewish territory of Medina to punish the Jews for their tyranny and shameless behaviour toward the Arabs. He gave presents and robes of honour to the Arab chiefs, and invited the chiefs of the Jews to a great royal feast where they were massacred. (This account is quoted from *Wafā'-ul-Wafā'*.) It is said that it was after this that Aus and Khazraj tribes of Medina regained power but, soon after, the two Arab tribes fell out and in a terrible battle most of the notables of both tribes lost their lives. As a consequence of this massacre both tribes became so weak that they approached the Quraish of Mecca seeking their alliance, but the offer was rejected by Abū Jahl.

The Arabs, though considerably freed from Jewish tyranny, still remained a good deal under the cultural domination of the Jews. A comparison between the two communities would show that the Arabs were ignorant and illiterate, while the Jews received education in their schools where they learnt their scriptures. Recognition of Jewish cultural superiority had reached such an extent that an Arab family in which there was great infant mortality very often vowed that if their child lived they would make him a Jew. The Jews were expecting a Prophet who, as the Messiah, would help them dominate over the rest of humanity. The Arabs of Medina were aware of this expectation of the Jews. But the Jews said that the Messiah would be born among themselves, although they had already rejected Jesus who was their own kith and kin. To accept anyone as a saviour or a Prophet, who was not an Israelite by birth, was impossible for the Jews. How could a non-Jew make the Jews rulers of the earth ? That was one of the main reasons why they could not accept Muhammad as a Prophet ; a non-Jewish Prophet was of no use to them.

The Preaching of Islam at Medina. In the matter of propagation of the faith the Prophet's first contact

with the people of Medina came about in Mecca, when Suwaïd bin Sāmit, a distinguished poet and soldier, came for a pilgrimage. When the Prophet met him, the poet read to him a book of the stories and wisdom of Luqmān. The Prophet, after listening to it, said, "I have something better than this," and recited some verses of the Qur'ān. Suwaïd deeply appreciated the verses but, before he could formally accept Islam, he was killed in the great battle between Aus and Khazraj.

We have already said that the Prophet used to approach the different tribes when they came to Mecca for pilgrimage. In the tenth year of his mission as he was moving about, seeking hearers, he noted some people and inquired who they were. He was told they were the Khazraj from Medina. The Prophet recited some verses of the Qur'ān to them. These six or seven persons began to look at one another, silently watching each other's reactions. Then they said, "Let us accept this Prophet and this faith, lest our rival Jews take precedence over us by their prior acceptance." All of them embraced Islam together.

Next year twelve men came from Medina for pilgrimage and became Muslims. They requested that a teacher be sent with them to Medina to teach Islam to others. The Prophet selected Mus'ab bin 'Umair for the purpose who went to Medina and was lodged in the house of As'ad bin Zarārah, a wealthy citizen of Medina. Mus'ab would make a daily round of the houses of some Arabs, reciting to them verses of the Qur'ān and teaching them the principles of Islam. Every day one or two persons embraced Islam. Within a very short time there were very few unconverted Arab families left. The Arabs were at the time in that stage of tribal life in which opinions of the chiefs were accepted uncritically and their advice followed without demur. When Sa'd bin Ma'ādh, moved by the verses of the Qurān recited by Mus'ab, was converted, the whole clan of Aus followed him into Islam. The year after this seventy-two men came for

pilgrimage from Medina, and secretly swore allegiance to the Prophet. 'Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet happened to be with him on the occasion, although he had not yet accepted Islam. Addressing these new converts, 'Abbās said, "People of Khazraj! Muḥammad is a respectable member of our family ; we have always defended him against his enemies. Now he proposes to go to you. If you could be loyal to him to the last, well and good, otherwise it is better that you give him up now." At this Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, one of the party, addressing the Prophet said, "We will defend you with our lives ; we have been brought up in the lap of swords." Interrupting him, another man said, "O Prophet ! we want one assurance from you. We have some relations with the Jews which will be adversely affected by our allegiance to you. It may happen that after you have gained power, and feel secure, you may leave us, and return to your own people in your home town." The Prophet smiled and said, "No, that will not happen. Henceforth your blood is my blood, you are mine and I am yours."

Twelve men were chosen as leaders from among this group. They swore allegiance on these terms : They will repudiate polytheism, and will not worship any other gods but Allah ; will not steal, and will commit neither adultery nor infanticide, nor indulge in scandal and calumny ; they will not disobey the Prophet when he asked them to do good. One of them said, "My friends, do you realise that it means incurring the hostility of Arabs and non-Arabs, and of every worldly power ?" They replied, "We do fully realise all this danger."

Acceptance of Islam by twelve chiefs meant the conversion of their entire clans who implicitly followed their chiefs. On account of these conversions Medina became an asylum for persecuted Muslims. They began slowly to drift towards that city. The Quraish tried to stop them but many of them made good their escape, slipping away by ones and twos. At last only the

Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Alī were left, along with a number of very poor and helpless people who lacked the means to migrate. These are the people to whom the Qur'ān refers as follows: "The weak among the men and the women and the children" (iv. 75).

6

POLITICAL STRUGGLE

ISLAM originally had no political ambitions and no programme for the foundation of a State but events conspired to put the Muslims on that road. Even with the best intentions on the part of the Muslims to live in peace with others, on the principle of live and let live, they could not avoid a clash with those who considered the new faith as a reversal of their immemorial beliefs and practices and subversive of their entire way of life. Human beings are not in general violently indignant at mere differences of belief. They, however, become apprehensive when a difference of belief connotes as a necessary corollary alteration of deep-rooted customs, habits and constitutions and is likely to become a threat to well-entrenched vested interests. An apt illustration of this is Hindu religious beliefs which are bewildering in their variety and diversity. For milleniums Hindu religious life has generated all sorts of beliefs. A Hindu remains a Hindu if he is a monist or a pluralist, a monotheist or a polytheist, an agnostic or an atheist. Even since the caste system hardened as the basic pattern of society, stratifying professions and privileges, and assigning to each caste its liberties or limitations, any belief could be tolerated and left to go its own way on condition that caste privileges and restrictions about eating, drinking, marrying, and other essential human relations were recognised and scrupulously adhered to. But Hindu society did not let Jainism flourish, and ousted Buddhism from the whole continent after it had flourished for a time. What annoyed the Brahmins

in Buddhism was not its mystical metaphysics, or its trans-mundane *Nirvānā*, or its personal ethics, because much of it was already there in Hindu schools of philosophy and religion. The chief and unforgivable crime of the otherwise innocuous Buddhism was the non-recognition of caste, the throwing open of religious life and salvation to the Brahmin and Shūdra alike, and the teaching that Brahminic ritualism was valueless as an avenue of spiritual well-being. Non-violent Buddhism could not defend itself against the machinations of the class that felt threatened by Buddhist ideology, so that Buddhism was wiped out from the country which gave it birth.

Islam too would have been utterly crushed and strangled at birth in Arabia if it had not ultimately decided to use force against force to save its very existence. Besieged and encompassed all around by idolatrous, predatory tribes, easily inflamed to murder and war, Islam could not have survived if Muslims had not gradually organised themselves in self-defence. They were persecuted in Mecca for about ten years, and then exiled and, in *Tā'if*, the Prophet was stoned. The Quraish could not let them live peacefully in Medina, because they considered the spread of Islam as a constant threat. Medina, to start with, appeared to be a haven of rest, but it was not destined to be so for long.

The Jews, who considered themselves God's own Chosen People, were very powerful in Medina and its surrounding territory. They had acquired wealth through trade and usury, and were big landlords. They had acquired wealth through trade and usury, and were big landlords. They had also some education. As compared to them the Arab tribes living in this region were illiterate, poor and weak, and at the time when Islam arrived in Medina, the major tribes of Aus and Khazraj had sapped their entire strength in the inter-tribal battle of *Bu'ath*, wherein their leaders and the flower of their youth had perished. The Jews had thought that

they would remain eternally dominant over the Arabs in this region, but with the advent of Islam in their midst they felt threatened. However much the Prophet assured them that Islam was almost the Judaic religion taught by Abraham, Moses and the great Israelite prophets, and hence it had a spiritual kinship with the Jews rather than with the idolatrous, polytheistic Arabs, the Jews of Medina would pay no heed to these affinities because their politico-economic dominance was threatened by the rising power of Islam. The Prophet made every effort to guarantee to them freedom and security, but that was not enough for them, because they felt that, if Islam triumphed, it would sound the death-knell of their dominance. The Jews of Medina and other places in Arabia were not all racially Jews, which is evidenced by their names Nadir, Marhab and Hārith. Jews, who are racially as well as religiously Jews, never give up their traditional Jewish names wherever they might live. Originally, there may have been a few who were also Israelites by race, but later on others of Arab descent were incorporated by conversion or, as we have already said. Ar. 1. 1. 1.

occupation of the country. They have driven away the Muslims, and have become instruments of Western imperialism, which is desirous of keeping a strangle-hold on the Middle East. This is exactly how the Jews recompensed the goodwill and generosity of Muhammad. The Prophet entered into a covenant with the Jews of Medina which is given in detail by Ibn Hisham. The terms of the covenant were as follows:

1. The custom of payment of blood-money and compensation shall continue as of old.
2. The Jews shall enjoy complete religious liberty and suffer no interference in their religious affairs.
3. The Jews and the Muslims shall live in friendly relations.
4. If any of the two communities have to fight a battle with any outsider they shall fight as allies.
5. No party shall offer asylum to the Quraish.
6. If Medina is invaded they shall together defend the city.
7. If any of the two communities makes a peace treaty with an enemy, the other community shall also be a party to it ; this stipulation shall not cover religious warfare.

Although the Jews had become apprehensive of Islam, they felt the satisfaction that Islam had so much in common with their own religion. Some of them had no hesitation in joining the Muslims in their prayers, although they had not accepted Islam in its entirety and had considerable mental reservations. Then something happened that annoyed them greatly. For about sixteen months the Muslims had been praying in the direction of Jerusalem which was Holy Land for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Then one day the Prophet changed his direction of prayer, and turned his face towards the Ka'bah in Mecca. The Jews felt greatly disturbed at this because, for them, it symbolised Muhammad's repudiation of what they had considered the Israelitic foundations of Islam. The question is : what could be the causes of this change ?

The primary cause would be that the Muslims believed that the Temple of Solomon was built a millenium or more after the erection of Ka'bah by Abraham. Ka'bah is called in the Qur'an as the first house of worship for the monotheists built by a prophet to whose creed Islam referred as "the religion of Abraham the upright". Secondly, the realisation dawned on Islam, when its basic ideology was well shaped, that it was a new orientation which shall have to distinguish itself from previous formulations of monotheistic faiths that had been corrupted by accretions and false interpretations. The change of the Qiblah, therefore, was a physical symbol of ideological reorientation. The Qur'an has dealt with this problem beautifully, saying that the ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of religion, if at all necessary, have secondary importance ; they are not the essential parts of faith. Directions of space have little meaning intrinsically in spiritual communion with a Being whose Light, according to the Qur'an, is "neither Eastern nor Western" (xxiv. 35). This concept was repeated in the verses which deal with the change in the spatial direction of prayer :

The fools among the people will say : What has turned them from their *qiblah* which they had ? Say : The East and the West belong only to Allah (ii. 142).

Again :

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but it is righteousness that one should believe in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him . . . (ii. 177).

This event which may have been considered merely as an event of historical significance is taken hold of by the Qur'an to announce to the whole world for all time the relation of ritual to righteousness, forgetting which people tend to equate religion with modes of worship. Ritual or external observance only assists, but does not replace, the spirit behind it. Unfortunately, this is a disease that sooner or later infects all

religions and becomes fatal. Jesus is known to have cured many physical ailments by the power of faith, but in reality it was not his primary function to restore the paralysed and give back sight to the physically blind. Such things could be done by much lesser persons than Jesus. His chief mission was to cure the religion of the Jews of what is called legalism or ritualism. Great Israelite Prophets before Jesus had also striven to eradicate this disease from the religious life of the people. The Qur'an too has warned religious people to be on guard against this recurring disease, emphasising the fact that spirituality is essentially a matter of faith, resulting in doing good to humanity. Some ceremonies and rituals are indispensable because of their social and psychological effects, but they must always be treated as means, and not as ends in themselves.

7

COMPELLED TO FIGHT

THE hostile critics of Muhammad try to present him before the world with the Qur'an in one hand and the sword in the other, offering the alternatives of conversion or death. There could be no greater calumny or falsehood than this accusation, unwarranted by facts, besides being thoroughly inconsistent with the ideology of Islam which proclaimed to the world : "There is no compulsion in religion" (ii. 256). Faith accepted under coercion is no faith at all ; a person who had adopted a faith under threat could never be a sincere believer ; he could only be a hypocrite about whom the Qur'anic verdict is that hypocrites shall be in the lowest abyss of hell. Muhammad had no sword to start with, when he and his early associates suffered heartrending persecution or martyrdom for a whole decade. All the swords of Arabia were unsheathed against him. Generally, when Islam captured the hearts of the people, these wielders of the sword submitted one after the other, drawn to the Prophet by the silken cords of love and veneration. None of the great heroes like 'Umer, Khālid and 'Amr ibn al 'Ās submitted to Islam at the point of the bayonet. Hitti says in his *History of the Arabs* that, within a short period of half a century, Islam produced a very large number of heroes unequalled in the history of any movement or nation. 'Umar, initially, was violently hostile to Islam, as Paul was hostile to Jesus and his religion. He had never contacted the

Prophet, and knew little about the religion that he preached. He accepted Islam on hearing a few verses of the Qur'an in the house of his sister, whom he had started thrashing for having accepted this new faith. From that house he went straight to the Prophet and announced his conversion for which the Prophet himself had been praying. Khalid, who struck hard at the Muslims in many a battle to crush them, came at last voluntarily to the Prophet as a penitent to offer homage, in company with 'Amr ibn al-'As, two great heroes who later on laid two empires low with single strokes. All Arabs were warriors; how could a powerless man like Muhammad make such people discard their ancient beliefs and practices except by the extraordinary power of his personality and the truth of the religion that he preached!

One may ask: why did not the Prophet trust only to his spiritual power to spread the faith till all the warrior tribes of Arabia felt that irresistible power and got converted peacefully to the new faith? To answer this question one has to cast only a cursory glance at the temperament and character of the Arabian tribes who had never submitted to the great imperial powers that continued to rise and fall round about them through the long course of history. They had remained wild and untractable. They were predatory tribes perpetually engaged in mutual conflict, glorying in murder and loot. On the slightest (real or imaginary) provocation they drew their swords, and feuds resulting in perpetual massacres lasted for generations. There are certain fundamental traits and attitudes that constitute the character of a nation and there are one or more ruling passions that determine their conduct in every sphere of life. The ruling passion of the Arabian tribes was war and loot. This could be explained not by any innate perversion but by the geographical condition of their habitat. The larger part of Arabia is an uncultivable and unproductive waste, an immense desert punctuated at long intervals with small oases.

Their entire life depended on sheep and goats and camels, which served them for food and clothing and shelter, and these too were insufficient in quantity, so they were always ready for predatory raids. Even three months of continual peace were considered intolerable. To understand their mode of life and their ideology one could study with advantage the conditions of the tribal belt extending over about a thousand miles on the western border of the west wing of what is now the State of Pakistan. There is a population of about three million people scattered in this unproductive mountainous area. On both sides of this vast tract so many great empires have risen and flourished and decayed from before the time of Alexander down to the British imperial regime. None of these powerful empires could subdue these tribes or make them accept any kind of law and order. Akbar the Great Mughal made an attempt but the whole expedition, headed by Birbal, was lost along with the leader who vanished without a trace. The British, with all their might in the nineteenth-century world and with their immense capacity of political organisation and diplomatic skill, could not bring them round to ways of peace. Britain, which defeated world conquerors like Napoleon and Hitler and extended her empire to all the five continents, felt helpless against these tribes and was compelled to protect itself against them by bribes or perpetual punitive expeditions, concentrating the major part of the country's armed forces on the fringes of this tract. To stop Russian expansion in Central Asia the British conquered Afghanistan under Lord Roberts, and seated a vassal on the throne of Kabul, but could do nothing to subdue these tribes that intervened between their Indian domain and Afghanistan. Lord Roberts, on his way back from the Afghan campaign, gathered the tribal chiefs, to lecture to them on the blessings of peace. He relates in his book *Forty Years in India* that, when he had finished his homily, an old tribal chief rose and answered him thus: "O Sahib!

all that you have said is good and applicable to the conditions in which populations settled in prosperous areas live, but for our life this has no relevance. When peace reigns for a long time we begin to starve, deprived of food and clothing and weapons, but when we engage in warfare some people may be killed on both sides, but we get a lot of booty ; it is not peace, whose praises you sing, but war which is a source of livelihood for us and a blessing ; so you keep your creed of peace for yourself if it is a blessing for you, but don't preach it to us because that impoverishes us."

Those who object to Muḥammad's fighting against hostile Arabian tribes do not know what they are talking about. If the Muslims had not made Herculean efforts to protect themselves and their religion against these martial, predatory hordes, Islam would have been destroyed at its very birth. War is bad, and necessarily entails cruelty, but peace at any price may result in creating and perpetuating greater cruelties, with destruction of all liberties and persecution and enslavement of the weak by unchecked aggressors let loose on peaceful humanity. The Qur'ān has repeatedly denounced the aggressors in very strong terms :

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not be aggressors ; surely Allah does not love those who commit aggression (ii. 190).

Whoever acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on you (ii. 194).

Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Apostle, and *they attacked you first* ? (ix. 13).

Muḥammad was not a fanatic about his religion. The Qur'ān praises generously the pious and good men of other creeds and does not preach the monopoly of good life and salvation only for the followers of Muḥammad. Surely it promises no blessings for the atheists and the idolatrous polytheists, but it would fain leave them to their own fate, provided they leave others alone. But "live and let live" was foreign to the

mental or moral outlook of the Arabian tribes. The tribal code was that he who was not with you was against you ; the peaceful approach to life was out of the question. Muhammad's desire for co-existence of all human groups is evidenced by the covenant he entered into with the Jews of Medina seeking to knit the two religious communities in sincere and fraternal alliance against all aggressors and disturbers of peace. The Prophet and his immediate successors granted a number of charters of complete religious liberty to the followers of other faiths guaranteeing to them fundamental human rights without discrimination. Non-Muslim populations flourished for centuries under Muslim rule, jointly creating great civilisations, as they did in Spain, and left whole continents like India mainly unconverted after about a millennium of Muslim rule. If the Qur'an and the sword were the only alternatives, history could not have witnessed this marvellous phenomenon of toleration. Under Arab imperialism of the early centuries of Islam wars were waged for mere territorial expansion and had nothing to do with Islam. Most of the monarchs who waged these wars led un-Islamic lives and, in any case, monarchy as an institution is un-Islamic. After the Arabs we meet with Muslim conquerors of other races engaged in conflict with Muslims and non-Muslims alike, because religion was not the motive of these wars. Just as the stupidities, cruelties and devastation of the Crusades have nothing to do with the creed of Jesus, so imperialistic wars of later Muslim dynasties and conquerors bear not the remotest relation to the defensive wars of Muhammad, fought for the preservation of religious and secular liberties, not only for the Muslims, but for all who accepted the creed of peaceful co-existence.

Murder and loot were so ingrained in the mind of the Arabian tribes that even today, bidding farewell to friends and relatives going on a journey, they say : "Return with safety and with booty." The Arabic word for booty is *ghanimah* which is a derivative from

ghanam which means "sheep". It was mostly the sheep of others which they used to steal or capture. To stop continued warfare for the whole year the tribes had agreed among themselves to three months of peace wherein war or depredation was tabooed, but whenever they were tempted to raid, they would shift these months this way or that. The primary cause of their predatoriness was economic, but very often other motives overrode economic considerations; feuds and vendettas continued for generations, vengeance for one murder leading to many more murders in an endless chain. To establish peace among the tribes of Arabia the Prophet in his sermon on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage announced the abolition of all inter-tribal feuds, starting with forgiveness for the murderers of his own tribe. It was this deep-rooted custom of feud that prevented the tribes for a long time from accepting Islam, because Islam started with creating fraternal bonds between tribes that accepted it. When a tribe was invited to accept Islam, it hesitated a good deal if it thought that as a point of honour feud was due against some other tribe and becoming Muslim would block this vengeance. When 'Amr bin Mālik after becoming a Muslim went back to his tribe and invited them to embrace Islam, he was told: "A feud is due against the tribe of 'Aqil; let us finish this before accepting Islam." Banū 'Aqil had become Muslims before this. 'Amr went into battle against them and killed a Muslim for which he repented greatly afterwards.

Vengeance for murder or vendetta had originated a superstition that when the murdered man dies his soul becomes a bird called *hāmah* or *sudā* and continues to hover over the place of murder crying for vengeance and repeating: "Slake my thirst, slake my thirst"; so long as the murder is not avenged there is darkness in the graves of the murdered. Accepting blood-money as compensation for murder was considered a disgrace. Lamentation over the murdered was also looked upon as a sign of weakness. Dying of mortal wounds was

held to be an honourable death; the spirit of a man who dies of wounds, it was believed, leaves the body peacefully through the slit. But if a person dies of disease or old age in bed, his spirit has to force an exit through the nose, and such death was considered ignominious and stigmatised as "nose death" (حَفَاف). This kind of religion and ethics was developed in the Arabian tribes through ages of perpetual conflict; their moral conceptions, directly or indirectly, revolved round this axis of killing and getting killed.

At the basis of this ethics was the necessity of or love for plunder. Islam tried to regulate and channelise their fighting instincts so that they may be used only for a religious cause; this ingrained love for booty, therefore, had also to be curbed. Appropriating the goods of the vanquished is a necessary corollary of war and in this respect the most civilised of nations have made no improvement; on the contrary, the practice has become more severe and inhuman. Enemy property, not only of the actual belligerents, but also of civilians, is confiscated and such heavy indemnities are imposed that the next generation also has to pay them through the nose unless the defeated nation rises again to wreak terrible vengeance: the treaty of Versailles and, its necessary consequence, the rise of Hitler, and the penalisation of the entire French nation after their defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870 are some instances among many, in point. So long as humanity does not get rid of war as an institution the problem of dealing with the property of the vanquished enemy shall remain. The only way to rationalise it is to entrust the matter in the hands of the State so that chaotic and individual grabbing by soldiers is declared unlawful. This is exactly what Islam did at a time when such an organised handling of enemy property existed neither as an injunction nor as a practice anywhere in the world. As individual murder was made unlawful, so individual loot was also stopped by the Qur'anic injunction explicitly given in the following verse:

O Prophet ! they ask you about the disposal of booty ; say that this belongs to God and the Prophet (viii. 1).

In Muslim jurisprudence "God" stands for common weal and in this verse the Prophet is mentioned, not as a co-sharer with God, but as an administrator of enemy property, because it is well known that the Prophet possessed no property and never took from the public chest more than the minimum to keep body and soul together. He felt restless if ever a few coins were left with him overnight. On his death-bed he inquired if there was any money in his house ; when told that there were a few gold coins, he ordered that they be given away to the needy : "Muhammad does not want to meet his God as a hoarder."

was of no avail for a long time till they suffered a heavy defeat in the Battle of Uhud when, merely because they could not resist falling upon booty they left the strategically important posts which the Prophet had assigned them to guard and not to leave under any circumstance. In the Battle of Hunain also they suffered because of the same bad irresistible urge. Many thought that the waging of the holy war for the sake of booty was an act of religious merit. A man asked the Prophet about it and received the reply that one with such a motive would get no merit whatsoever. The man related this to his companions. They were surprised at this and thought that he must have misunderstood the Prophet. He was sent back for clarification and received the same reply.

For the very survival of Islam the wild and cruel Arabian tribes had not only to be crushed and subdued but, after submission to and acceptance of Islam, they had to be taught to minimise the cruelty of warfare. Shibli Nu'mānī, the most outstanding of the modern biographers of the Prophet, relates the cruel habits of the pre-Islamic Arabs against which Islam had to defend itself:

- (1) When they slaughtered the prisoners of war there was a wholesale holocaust, woman and children included; sometimes they were burnt.
- (2) Night attack on an enemy tribe and murdering and looting them was common. Such commandos were considered to be very brave; they were called *fattāk*.
- (3) Sometimes enemies were burnt alive. When Banū Tamīm murdered a brother of 'Amr ibn Hind, a ruling chief, he vowed to kill one hundred of them in vengeance. He attacked the tribe but they fled away, and only an old woman of the name of Hamrā' was left. He caught hold of her and burnt her alive. As she was smouldering, an enemy rider of the name of 'Ammār arrived on the spot. When asked

why he had come he replied that he was hungry and seeing smoke from afar he thought there might be some food being cooked there. 'Amr pushed him also in the fire.

- (4) Another heartless practice was making a target of little children of the enemy.
- (5) They mutilated the hands and feet and other external organs of the vanquished foe and left them to die. A slave of the Prophet was treacherously mutilated like this and then his eyes and tongue were pricked with thorns.
- (6) When the fury of vengeance was not abated even after killing a foe, his dead body was mutilated. Hindah, the wife of Abū Sufyān, ate the liver of valiant Hamzah, a very dear uncle of the Prophet, in the Battle of Uhud and wore round her neck a garland made of the mutilated organs of the dead.
- (7) They vowed that if they succeeded in killing an enemy they would make a cup of his skull and drink wine in it.
- (8) They cut open the abdomen of pregnant women and sang about it with pride.

It was necessary to mention these cruelties to show why a peace-loving Prophet was compelled to crush such enemies—so that humanity could live in peace. The Prophet was averse to unnecessary violence; force was allowed to be used only to establish peace. The Prophet allowed his followers to fight either when they were actually attacked or when it became certain that the enemy was preparing an attack and the intended attack had to be averted by forestalling it. When the Prophet came away from Mecca to seek asylum in Medina for himself and his followers and preach and practise Islam peacefully, the Quraish of Mecca did not let him alone. They were afraid of the growing power of Islam, which, if successful, would not only destroy their religion but strike at the root of their privileged position as custodians of the Ka'bah which

was a source of manifold benefits for them. They made preparations to attack the Muslims in Medina and incited all Arabian tribes against them, warning them that if Islam succeeded they would all lose their independence. The Muslims in Medina felt themselves threatened from all sides. For a long time they slept with their weapons by their side and Muhammad was among those who often kept awake during the night for fear of a surprise attack. The Quraish wrote to 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who was virtually the chief of Medina before the arrival of the Prophet, that if he did not exile Muhammad from the town they would attack and put an end to him along with Muhammad.

For the protection of Medina the Prophet organised scouting parties. To the direction which threatened the Muslims scouts were sent to collect information; they went in small parties, generally consisting of ten or twelve men, and, for emergencies, they had to go armed. This small number could not be meant to engage in fighting or robbing enemy caravans because caravans moved with hundreds of armed protectors. The power of the Quraish and many other tribes lay in trade and a sure way of ending their hostility was to make them feel that their caravan-route to Syria which passed through territory neighbouring Medina would be closed to them if they continued to threaten the Muslims. When Abū Dharr Ghifārī, the saintly friend and follower of the Prophet, was assaulted in the courtyard of the Ka'bah, 'Abbās who had not yet accepted Islam warned the assaulting idolaters that if they misbehaved with that man of the tribe of Ghifār, their trade would suffer because this tribe lay on the route of their trade caravans. This threat proved effective in making his persecutors desist from any further injury to Abū Dharr.

Scouting expeditions were called *Sarāyah*; the Prophet never accompanied such parties. But when it was reported that enemy forces were actually gathering

somewhere for attack, he would very often proceed with a sufficiently strong armed batch to nip the mischief in the bud. Such a preventive or punitive expedition was called *Ghazwah*. That all the wars of the Prophet were defensive or preventive or were in the nature of punitive expeditions can be proved by keeping their causes in view. (For this see Shibli, *Sirat-un-Nabī*, Vol. I, pp. 519-61.) Many clashes with the tribes occurred as a result of their hostility towards Islam's missionary efforts. The Muslims desired not merely to be left alone in peace, but it was an essential part of their dynamic faith to preach it to the rest of the world, for which latter purpose some parties were sent out as missionaries. They could not fight or use force in the pursuit of their missionary activities, as Islam prohibits coercion in the matter of faith. Sometimes, however, these missionary groups met with armed opposition, were attacked and killed. One of the basic principles of Islam emphatically enunciated in the Qur'an is the sanctity of life. The Qur'an corroborates in this respect the teaching of the Old Testament that the unlawful murder of an individual violates the sanctity of entire human life and must be dealt with by dire punishment:

For this reason did We prescribe to the Children of Israel that whoever slays a person, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men (v. 32).

God and His Prophet wanted to establish law and order and security for all peace-loving citizens irrespective of the differences of creed and race. Unless aggression and homicide were put a stop to or effective preventive measures adopted against those who indulged in them, the essential purpose of Islam, the establishment of basic human liberties, could not be fulfilled.

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hand and their

feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned (v. 33).

The ultimate objective of Islam, the establishment of universal security, can be gathered from what the Prophet foretold before 'Adī, the son of the famous Hātim Ṭā'ī, entered Islam. The Prophet said, "God will fulfil His purpose till such security is established that a single man riding a camel shall travel from San'ā to Hadramaut perfectly secure from human beings, having no fear in his mind except the fear of God or a wild beast" (Abū Sa'd.) In another Hadīth according to Bukhārī, the Prophet is reported to have said that "God's purpose shall be so completely fulfilled that an unattended woman shall travel from Qādisiyah to Mecca as a pilgrim, fearing none except God." 'Adī says that he saw with his own eyes the fulfilment of this prophecy; a lonely woman actually travelled from Qādisiyah to Mecca unmolested and unharmed. Those who go on censuring the Prophet for fighting in defence of this noble cause and accuse him of being ruthless to the murderous predatory tribes should look to the result of his fight. Arabia, that had never experienced inter-tribal peace and where individual security was unknown, became united and peaceful during the life of the Prophet, and the rise in revolt of some of the tribes after his death was the leaping of the flame before it is finally extinguished. *Pax Islamica* was established within a century from Spain to the borders of China.

All the fights of the Prophet had the ultimate objective of crushing the aggressors to establish freedom of conscience and worship. The Muslims were ordered to fight till people can worship God in security.

And fight with them until there is no more persecution (viii. 39).

As later Muslim history corroborates, they were not fighting only to make themselves powerful and

secure in order to be able to coerce others to accept their faith. The Qur'an explicitly sanctions war only against aggressors who, if unchecked and unsubdued, shall destroy the religious liberties of the followers of all creeds:

And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered (xxii. 40).

The admirable point worth noting and appreciating in this verse is that the protection of mosques is mentioned last after the defence of churches, synagogues and temples of other religious communities.

The Muslim missionaries sent out by the Prophet to tribes were teaching a religion of universal security for all, but the wild tribes tortured, even murdered, some of these peace-preaching missionaries. Let us mention a few instances. In the year 3 H. in the month of Safar a party of Muslims proceeded to preach Islam on invitation by their chief to the Kilāb tribe, but on the way near Bi'r Ma'ūnah, the tribes of Ri'l and Dhakwān killed them all, except one who escaped to Medina to tell the tragic tale. About the same time an invitation was received from the tribes of 'Adl and Qārah to send a party to them to instruct them in Islam. Ten persons was selected by the Prophet. The party included 'Āsim, Khubaib and Murthid. When they reached Rajī', Banū Lahyān attacked the party; all except one were killed. Three years later a punitive expedition was despatched, but the tribe ran away. In the year 7 H. the Prophet sent a party of fifty missionaries to Banū Salīm under the leadership of Ibn Abi'l-'Auja'. They were received with a shower of arrows; except the leader of the party all were killed. In the month of Rabī'-ul-Awwal 8 was sent Ka'b ibn 'Umar Ghifārī with a party of fifteen missionaries to a place on the borders of Syria. Here too all were martyred except one who brought the news

to Medina. In the wild conditions of Arabia an armed guard often accompanied such preaching parties but they were explicitly ordered not to take up arms except in self-defence. Once it happened that Khālid ibn Walīd and thirty armed men were sent with a preaching party to Bani Judhaimah. Knowing Khālid's temperament the Prophet commanded him not to fight but Khālid's impetuosity overcame the orders of the Prophet; in a fight provoked by Bani Judhaimah, he killed many of them. When the Prophet came to know of this killing, facing the Qiblah he implored God to exonerate him from the iniquity of Khālid; he repeated three times: "O God! blame me not for this act." Then he commissioned 'Alī to go to this tribe and pay compensation for the killed including even their dogs. In the year 10 H., the Prophet sent 'Alī with 300 protecting riders to Yemen, and ordered him not to fight unless attacked: "As long as you stay there, do not start fighting unless you are attacked" (Ibn Sa'd, *Maghāzī*, p. 122).

Even a righteous war is an evil necessity. No great religion ever arose among such cruel and lawless people as the Arabs. There were only two alternatives for incipient Islam: either to suffer persecution and martyrdom and be wiped out before the world outside could be aware of it or to stand up with iron determination to crush force with force when all methods of peaceful persuasion proved to be of no avail. It was fortunate for humanity and for civilisation that Islam did not choose the path of passive martyrdom. War had to be resorted to, but the war waged by a man of God, not actuated by any lower motives, cannot be equated with the war waged by wild and egotistic emotions. Neither Christianity nor Islam, nor moral progress of humanity in many directions, nor the advancement of rationalistic secular culture has been able to stop war as a means of settling the national disputes. The evils that have to await a long process of social evolution to be finally eradicated have to be minimised

so long as they persist. The case of war is on a par with the inhuman institution of slavery which neither the prophets, nor social reformers, nor philosophers could abolish seventeen centuries after Christianity and twelve centuries after Islam. The only thing that pious Christians and pious Muslims could do was to minimise the rigours of slavery or avoid having slaves for themselves or emancipate them individually as an act of spiritual merit or human kindness. During the course of man's socio-economic development a time arrived when effective measures could be adopted to end this millenniums old inhuman institution. But war as a necessary or unnecessary evil continues not only to exist but to increase in cruelty and devastation till humanity reaches a point where total annihilation of the human species is threatened. Only God knows how long it will take to throw this evil institution also on the scrap heap of discredited and discarded institutions.

Islam did about war what it did in the case of slavery. It taught humanity under what conditions and for what purposes war could be permissible. The entire teaching of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet point only to one justification of war and that is warding off aggression and establishment of fundamental human liberties. War for personal or collective gains is absolutely prohibited, and war to coerce others to accept a particular creed or ideology is equally condemned. The Muslims have ruled over non-Muslim populations for long centuries without interfering with their religions and without putting any pressure on them for conversion. The Prophet himself implemented this injunction of Islam in his lifetime by granting charters to Jews and Christians, and his immediate successors continued this practice. We will quote those injunctions and charters in another chapter. As we have said before, Islam viewed war as a surgical operation which has to be performed only as a last resort when medicine alone cannot be effective. No surgeon

would inflict unnecessary violence and pain.

Before Islam inter-tribal wars in Arabia were actuated by revenge or greed and all the imaginable cruelties were practised against the enemy. The pre-Islamic Arabs were not much different from the Israelites who practised wholesale massacres and enslavement of the enemies under religious sanction; the Old Testament is replete with these horrible accounts. Islam's religious reform included also reforming cruel practices during wars. When the Prophet sent an army against an enemy his orders were not to kill women and children, infants and old men. Servants and slaves also were not to be killed because they were subject to the compelling will of their masters. "Do not kill any aged person, a child, an infant or a woman" (Abū Dāwūd). If in any battle a woman was found killed he felt it deeply and issued peremptory orders to beware. It was the custom of the Arabs either to kill war prisoners outright or to subject them to tortuous death by tying them to a pole and making them a target of arrows. Even after Islam sometimes someone resorted to this cruelty. When 'Abdul Rāhmān the son of Khālid did it, Abū Ayyūb Ansārī admonished him and told him that the Prophet had severely condemned this treatment of war prisoners. Abū Ayyūb said, "By God, would not bear to kill a chicken like that." Having learnt of this Islamic injunction, 'Abdur Rāhmān repented and set free four slaves as an atonement.

Following the injunction of the Qur'ān the immediate successors of the Prophet instructed the troops about religious liberty, respecting the priests of all religions and protecting places of worship. People who took refuge in their houses were not to be pursued and killed. Fruit trees and harvests of the enemies were not to be destroyed. Prisoners of war were to be treated with kindness and after cessation of hostilities they were either to be ransomed or set free as a magnanimous act. The Quraish captured by the Muslims during the Battle of Badr were ordered to be

treated kindly although they were mortal enemies of Islam and the Muslims. The Prophet entrusted them to his Companions with orders that they should be properly fed, so that while the Muslims contented themselves only with dates, they offered good food to the prisoners. In the Battle of Hunain 6000 prisoners were taken. They were not only all set free without any ransom, but every prisoner also received as gift a pair of valuable clothes (Ibn Sa'd). This was in keeping with the Qur'anic description of good Muslims: "for the love of God they feed the poor, the orphans and the prisoners" (lxvi. 8).

When the Prophet found that the soldiers spread out in all directions entered the houses of people and took away what they desired, he ordered that from then on they should not roam about nor touch the goods of people who were not fighting them. The Prophet said: "Whoever engages in war for personal material benefit of any kind his war is not holy." In the Battles of Badr and Uhud when the Muslims fell upon booty as an old ingrained Arab habit they were upbraided by God:

There are some that crave for the worldly goods and there are others who long for the gift of the Hereafter (iii. 151.)

God desired that they should prefer the Hereafter.

Asked about the value of various incentives which goaded the fighters to action, the Prophet replied: "Some fight for booty, others to show bravery or get praise, but only he is a righteous fighter who fights for the glory of God; only he gets spiritual merit."

The Arabian tribes recognised neither inter-tribal morality nor inter-tribal code of behaviour in war or in peace. On account of absence of inter-group ethics or law they never considered themselves bound by any treaty and even the life of an envoy was not safe. In this land of anarchy Islam introduced respect for treaties and covenants and complete security for envoys. Security for envoys is now universally

recognised in the civilised world, but respect for treaties is yet to be. All politics is still power politics; nations make treaties when it suits them and break them without the least scruple when they feel that they are in a position to violate them with impunity.

The Qur'ān repeats so often and so emphatically the injunction to do justice even when it goes against the believers; it exhorts human beings to fulfil the covenants they have entered into, even when opportunity or necessity tempts them to violate them. We will give a few examples of how the Prophet acted upon this injunction himself and disciplined others in this respect. Ḥudhaifah and his father had remained in Mecca even after the Prophet and most of the Muslims had left for Medina. When he wanted to leave, the Quraish would not let him go. They said, "You will go and join the Muslims in Medina to fight against us." On his assurance that he wanted to migrate peacefully and had no intention to fight the Quraish, he was allowed to depart. On reaching Badr he found the Muslims at war with the Quraish. He wanted to join the Muslims in war, but the Prophet said, "No, you must keep your promise not to fight against the Quraish." Another instance is that of Abū Rāfi'. He came to the Prophet in Medina as an envoy of the Quraish but, impressed by Muhammad and his religion, he accepted Islam and said to the Prophet that he would not go back to the infidels. The Prophet said, "No, you have to go back now; envoys are not held back." The most touching example is that of Abū Jandal. He was chained and tortured in Mecca by the Quraish. He fled from Mecca still in chains and reached Hudaibiyah when the Prophet had just entered into a treaty with the Quraish in which he had agreed to the condition that if a Muslim ran away from Mecca to join the Muslims he would be returned to Mecca. Abū Jandal showed the wounds and brands on his body to the Prophet and the Muslims, and related the tortures to which he had been subjected, imploring that he

should not be handed back to the cruel tyrants. The sight was heartrending for the Muslims and the tender heart of the Prophet was also deeply moved. 'Umar and Abū Bakr insistently requested the Prophet that the persecuted man should not be handed back to the Quraish for continued torture. But the Prophet would not agree to a step which was tantamount to violating a condition in the contract solemnly entered into.

The fulfilment of a contract was held by the Prophet to be immensely more binding than the consideration of an individual's pain or martyrdom. During more than a decade of his life in Medina where he was constantly engaged in hot or cold war with most of the tribes of Arabia he made repeated attempts to enter into treaties with his actual and potential enemies, and there is not a single instance in which he violated any treaty, in spite of the fact that others did that so often. Whenever the treachery or evil intentions of the other party became manifest he would never act in violation of a solemnly entered treaty but give the enemy sufficient notice for its termination. The Arabian tribes knew no such ethics. Before the treaty of Hudaibiyah the messenger sent by the Prophet to the Quraish was assaulted; his camel was killed and he narrowly escaped with his life. Musailimah the "false prophet" who mobilised a great force to destroy the Muslims sent an envoy to the Prophet who spoke to him most insolently. Any Arab, before Islam, would have put the man to the sword without the least hesitation. The Prophet said to him, "Your status as an envoy saves your life, otherwise you deserve to be killed."

As the Prophet was constantly engaged in breaking the armed disturbances of numerous hostile tribes and the Muslims were urged to fight in defence of their faith and for sheer self-preservation, the ignorant and hostile critics of Islam broadcast the calumny that the primary duty of the Muslims was, and is, to kill the unbelievers or to subdue them by force. One can see that there is not a shred of truth in this accusation.

It was after having suffered terrible persecution and exile that the Muslims were permitted to use force against force. The reason for this ugly necessity is given in the following verses:

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them—those who have been repelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah (xxii. 39-40).

And they are permitted to fight only till the world is free from tyranny and anarchy:

And fight with them until there is no more persecution (viii. 39).

The moment peace is established and the reign of law is restored, the rulers are not to exploit others and dominate over them but to be humble and prayerful and charitable: a good government should urge the people to virtuous conduct and prevent them from evil:

Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and enjoin good and forbid evil (xxii. 41).

Prosperity and power are as much a trial for human character as adversity and helplessness, though power is a greater danger than poverty. The Prophet is reported to have said: "About your character I fear not poverty so much as prosperity." Muhammad was tested as a persecuted prophet as few human beings have ever been tested; his steadfastness in that long decade of torture was admirable and heroic. This stanza of the English poet Morriz fits his character and conduct so perfectly:

Stand upright, speak thy thought, declare
The Truth thou hast, that all may share;
Be bold, proclaim it everywhere.
They only live who dare.

It is this quality of his character—remaining constant in all the vicissitudes of his career—that made him the most successful of all the prophets in human history. Let us see how he behaved in the hour of his greatest triumph, his victorious and peaceful entry into Mecca. He was always averse to unnecessary bloodshed and so he waited for full eight years in Medina to become strong enough in men and means to make this venture so that mere show of overwhelming struggle should accomplish this supreme objective without loss of human life. Even if the Quraish had remained quiescent after the treaty of Hudaibiyah, it would have been justified in God's good time that Muḥammad and his associates exiled from Mecca should return to their homeland in sufficient strength to live there in peace and preach and practise their religion without molestation; but circumstances arose which accelerated this inevitable event, so necessary to make Islam secure and stable, because Mecca in idolatrous hands would never have let Islam succeed even in Arabia. After the treaty of Hudaibiyah the tribe of Khuzā'ah had become an ally of the Muslims and Banū Bakr had joined them to oppose the Quraish, but then all of a sudden, in disregard of the agreement, Banū Bakr attacked the Khuzā'ah tribe and the Quraish helped the aggressors. The Khuzā'ah were overwhelmed and entered the sanctuary of the Haram of Ka'bah where bloodshed was prohibited, but even here Naufal, the chief of the Banū Bakr, violated the sanctity of the Haram and killed men of the Khuzā'ah tribe. After this, forty riders of the Khuzā'ah tribe came to Medina and appealed to the Prophet in the name of their alliance with him. The Prophet felt greatly grieved at this sorry plight of a friendly tribe assisting whom was a sacred duty. He sent a messenger to the Quraish offering them three alternatives:

- (1) They should pay blood-money for the murdered.
- (2) The Quraish shall not assist Banū Bakr who are guilty of aggression.

(3) They should announce termination of the treaty of Hudaibiyah.

The Quraish first preferred the third alternative, but immediately after the return of the Prophet's envoy they considered it injurious to their interest and sent Abū Sufyān to Medina to renew the treaty of Hudaibiyah whose terms were greatly advantageous to them and adverse for the Muslims. He besearched everyone to renew it, but no one paid any heed to him and the Prophet preferred to march to Mecca.

These military activities were forced upon an essentially merciful man by the cruel necessity of dealing with cruel tribes. He acted on the Qur'ānic injunction that on an evil-doer equal evil could be inflicted in the interest of law and order and in the prevention of crime, but wherever forgiveness and reformatory handling are feasible they are to be preferred to punishment: "The punishment of an evil is the like of it" (x. 27).

An occasion to act upon this soon presented itself. As secret preparations were being made for the march, Hātib, one of the Meccan emigrants who was otherwise a good, faithful Muslim, by sheer weakness and fear, committed an offence for which any military commander would have killed him. Hātib's kith and kin were still in Mecca and he thought that if Mecca was attacked by the Muslims his relatives there were sure to suffer at the hands of the Quraish. He tried to ingratiate himself with the Quraish of Mecca by sending them a letter about the imminent invasion, so that in gratitude they might spare his relatives. When the Prophet came to know of this, he asked 'Alī to hasten and intercept the letter. When the contents of the letter were read out everyone was shocked and the stern 'Umar proposed to behead the culprit; but the Prophet, ever reluctant to punish, said: "Don't punish the man, maybe God has forgiven him because of his active participation in the Battle of Badr." Besides, thereby, providing an example of forgiveness even in such un-

forgivable cases the Prophet set a good principle of criminal jurisprudence: a man's exceptionally good conduct previous to the commitment of a punishable crime, in a moment of weakness, entitling him to lenient treatment. Ten thousand soldiers started the march under the wise and benign leadership of an ideal Prophet who was destined to set an example to the whole world or to all individuals and groups, of conquering the enemy with love. On the road to Mecca some other friendly tribes augmented the number, and finally halted at Marr al-Zahrān, a place about one stage distant from the city. The Quraish sent Hakim ibn Hazām (a nephew of the Prophet's wife Khadījah), Budail ibn Warqā', along with Abū Sufyān himself to go and quietly judge the strength of the Muslims. The guard of the Prophet's tent saw Abū Sufyān and men like 'Umar thought it was a God-given opportunity to kill the chief of the Quraish of Mecca, who had been the chief culprit in persecuting the Muslims and who was mainly responsible for all their sufferings. Here God had delivered into their hands the man who had pursued the helpless Muslims in their asylum in Abyssinia and who had for fifteen years constantly incited the whole of Arabia against Muhammad and his followers, who had attacked Medina so many times and killed thousands of Muslims. 'Umar reportedly asked the Prophet permission to kill this arch-enemy of Islam. The permission was refused; the Prophet wanted to set a great example to warring humanity of how to 'conquer an enemy by love and forgiveness, forgetting innumerable acts of treachery and cruelty on his part. 'Abbās also interceded for Abū Sufyān. 'Umar repeated his request to the Prophet, when, not understanding 'Umar's attitude, 'Abbās said to him accusingly, "O 'Umar, you would not have been so hard in retaliation if Abū Sufyān had been a member of your tribe." 'Umar replied correctly: "Tribal biases have no place in Islam; although you do not belong to my tribe, your acceptance of Islam gave me much

greater pleasure than on my own father's conversion.'" Bukhārī relates that Abū Sufyān accepted Islam immediately on being arrested, but the historian Ṭabarī records a short dialogue between Abū Sufyān, and the Prophet :

The Prophet : Abū Sufyān, are you still unconvinced that there is no being worthy of worship except One God ?

Abū Sufyān : If there were any other God, he would have helped us today.

The Prophet : Do you still doubt that I am a messenger of God ?

Abū Sufyān : There is no doubt about it.

It could be said Abū Sufyān was talking like this having been overwhelmed and overcome by a superior force. He might still be suffering from uncertainty, but it is related by all historians that his conduct after that in the service of Islam was sincere which established his genuine conversion and change of heart.

The Prophet had resolved to make a bloodless entry into Mecca but the deep-rooted martial spirit of some was straining at the leash. The tribal batches, well armed and in high spirits, passed before Abū Sufyān who was standing on a hillock viewing this armed might with dismay. The Ansārī group was led by Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah holding the standard. Looking at Abū Sufyān he shouted : "This is the day of a severe battle in which fighting in the Haram of Ka'bah shall become lawful." When the Prophet's batch, whose standard-bearer was Zubair bin al-'Awwām passed before Abū Sufyān he complainingly asked the Prophet if he had heard what 'Ubādah had said. The Prophet said, " 'Ubādah is wrong in what he has said ; on the contrary, this is the day of the sanctity and glory of the Ka'bah. There shall be no fighting and no bloodshed." The Prophet announced, "Whoever lays down arms or shuts himself in his house or takes refuge in Abū Sufyān house shall be secure." In spite of this announcement, a party of the Quraish warriors shot a

volley of arrows on the detachment that was under Khālid's command killing two persons. Khālid was forced to retaliate; the enemy fled leaving thirteen dead behind. When Khālid explained to the Prophet that it was not they who started the fight, the Prophet remarked, "It was unavoidable destiny." How considerate was Muhammad about the rights of even an enemy can be gathered from the fact that he refused to go back to his own house because 'Aqīl, a son of Abū Ṭālib, after inheriting it from his father, had sold it to Abū Sufyān who was now in legal possession of it. The Prophet said he would stay in Khīf, the place where the Prophet and the entire Hāshimī clan were kept in close siege by the Meccans before Hijrah.

The Prophet entered the Ka'bah. This memorial of Abraham the idol-breaker had 360 idols in its compound, one for each day of the lunar year. The Prophet as he turned each of the idols down was reciting: "The truth has come and the falsehood vanished; surely falsehood is a vanishing thing" (xvii. 81). There were many gods inside the Ka'bah itself. Before entering the Prophet ordered that they be thrown out. 'Umar entered the hall and cleared it of all idols, and also rubbed off the images on the walls. The Prophet then entered it with Bilāl and Talhah. The place resounded with the cry of *Allah Akbar* (God is the Highest Reality). According to some accounts, the Prophet also offered prayer in the Ka'bah. The Prophet then addressed the whole gathering in which his friends as well as foes were standing shoulder to shoulder. This short speech, though directly addressed to the people gathered there, was really an announcement for the whole of humanity. It started with affirming the unity of God which is the foundation of true religion, how Truth ultimately triumphs over falsehood and in its triumph lay the foundation of universal peace. He announced that henceforth all feuds and vendettas were abolished and all demands of compensatory blood-money set aside. Pride of tribe or race was declared to

be irrational and was to be wiped out by belief in the equality of mankind which had a common origin in humble clay. "There is no god but Allah, He is One without a partner, He has fulfilled His promise and has helped His slave and defeated diverse groups of the enemies. Listen! any claim of superiority, blood-revenge and usury is trampled under my feet this day except the claims of the service of (Ka'bah) the House of God and provision of water to the pilgrims. O people of Quraish! the pride and vanity of the Days of Ignorance—the pride of noble descent—has been removed from you. All men are the progeny of Adam and Adam was created out of clay." At the end he recited the following verse of the Qur'an:

O ye men! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty) (xlii. 13).

He concluded his address announcing total prohibition of trade in liquor.

When the speech was over, he turned towards the rows of his vanquished enemies. He saw before him individuals guilty of the most heinous crimes; tyrants who had for about two decades tortured, persecuted and murdered men and women, old and young; vile men who had continuously showered abuse on him, who had stoned him; heartless men who had stabbed pregnant women; cruel men who had burnt and branded helpless Muslims. It is easy to preach idealistic morality and inculcate kindness towards an enemy, but only a man deeply imbued with the love of God and Man can practise it in the circumstances in which the Prophet now found himself. If he had held a Nuremberg trial and killed all of them, normal codes of human justice could not have raised a finger against him, but in that case he would be just a conqueror and not a prophet who had been teaching the world that Allah is Beneficent and Merciful Who sends some chosen in-

dividuals to the world to serve as exemplars because they have assimilated these Divine attributes. He addressed this crowd of criminals and asked them: "Do you know how I propose to deal with you?" Cruel as these enemies were, they had known Muhammad before his prophetic mission to be kind and gentle and forgiving; and even through the years that they were attempting to kill him and crush his movement they had known that the man was not personally revengeful. They replied that they expected from him only what was noble: "Thou art a noble brother, the son of a noble brother." The Prophet replied, "I don't charge you of any crime today; go your way, you are all free." Is there any case in long human history which can equal in magnanimity this act of unconditional forgiveness for the types of enemy whom Muhammad forgave? Did he not prove himself worthy of the title divinely bestowed on him, *Rahmatun li'l-'Ālimīn*, a blessing for the whole of humanity, friends as well as foes? Taking his cue from this historically unique act, a Christian member of the Australian Parliament, discussing the treatment to be meted out to vanquished Japan, said, "Let us forget all the cruelties and iniquities practised by this enemy and treat the Japanese as Muhammad had treated his enemies."

It will be remembered that the sole basis of this struggle was religious, yet the fact remains that nobody was forced to accept Islam. There were some who suffered from impotent rage at the success of Islam and were sorry to see their temple emptied of their gods and idols. They lived on in Mecca long after their defeat and nobody forced them to accept Islam. The historians and biographers record that many of these unconverted idolators fought along with the Muslims in the Battle of Hunain; and it was one of the causes of defeat in this battle that these idolatrous allies had no heart in the fight. Some notables of Mecca had fled away to distant places for fear of punishment. Refer-

ing to Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah who had fled to Jeddah. ‘Umair ibn Wahab said to the Prophet, “It is a pity that an Arab chief has exiled himself.” The Prophet said, “Go, bring him back from Jeddah assuring him that he shall neither be punished nor forced to change his religion.” To convince Ṣafwān of the offer being from himself, the Prophet gave ‘Umair his turban as a guarantee. ‘Umair went to Jeddah and brought Ṣafwān back. Up to the Battle of Hunain he did not accept Islam.

MORALS AND MANNERS

Precept and Example

THE Holy Book declares about Muḥammad that he is a man of high morals and a worthy exemplar for others ; he said about himself that he had been sent to the world as a Teacher. As Islam did not claim to be the first true religion but a reminder of the great spiritual truths taught to every civilised group of humanity, so the morals that it preached had been taught and practised by virtuous people since time immemorial. Respect for all spiritual religions that had preceded the mission of Muḥammad as well as unstinted appreciation of all the great teachers of mankind is an essential part of the Islamic faith. But two things distinguish Islam from all that had gone before it. Firstly, of all the prophets Muḥammad is the most historical. He stands before the world in the broad daylight of history with his entire private and public life open for appreciation or criticism. Accounts of his sayings and doings may sometimes vary in small details but the broad outlines of his outlook, his character and conduct are unmistakable. Historians of religion have acknowledged the fact that the Scripture he gave to the world has been transmitted through the centuries without accretion, subtraction or modification, and the Qur'ān is a mirror of Muḥammad's life and mission. It is not a book that is meant merely to eulogise him ; it is so frank about him that while, on the one hand, it does not hesitate to appreciate his conduct when it is exemplary and praiseworthy, on the

other hand, it records honestly his lack of perfection wherever it manifests itself.

At the advent of Islam, three great religions were professed by the major portion of the civilised world—Buddhism, Christianity and Brahmanism. All the three had developed two common characteristics: incarnation and asceticism. Buddha talked of no God or gods and preached only this metaphysical doctrine that the Ultimate Reality transcends all categories of life and empirical existence and it is only by total negation of the latter, effected by annihilation of the "Will to Live," that man can attain to it, and get identified with it in the state of *Nirvana*. Buddha claimed that after Enlightenment he himself had attained to that state; in other words, he proclaimed his identity with the Ultimate Reality. This is the Buddhistic version of Incarnation. Brahmanism had developed various cults, but the most widespread and popular belief was that the great spiritual leaders like Rama and Krishna were *Avtars* or Incarnations of the Supreme Being. In one of the great scriptures of the Hindus, *Bhagvat Gita* (The Songs Divine), Krishna, speaking as God Incarnate, says that incarnation takes place repeatedly in the course of human history wherever true religion gets depraved. Jesus was born among the Israelites who would have considered belief in Incarnation as an unforgivable blasphemy. Jesus, true to his national tradition, considered himself to be a great prophet. Very little of his life is known except the sketchy record of his three years' ministry, but the Gospels present him as a man struggling with temptations and overcoming them, but always conscious of being a humble creature and not the Creator of the universe, eternally perfect in every way. When somebody calls him good he refutes him by saying that not he but his Father in Heaven is good, meaning thereby that perfection belongs to God alone and is not attributable even to the most exalted of His creatures. It was men like Paul and Augustine, saturated with Hellen-

istic philosophy, Graeco-Roman mysteries and myths mixed with certain Oriental creeds, that brought in Incarnation, Trinity and Atonement, death and resurrection of a god and assimilating him by transubstantiation of bread and wine in the sacrament of Eucharist. One of the fundamental reforms in religious beliefs that Islam brought about was to redefine the respective status of God and Man, proclaiming to the world what the great prophets themselves had proclaimed before Muhammad that, although Indefinite Reality, that is the alpha and omega of all existence, manifests itself in the infinite variety, and gradation of creation and humanity is one of His supreme manifestations, yet no finite creature can be completely identified with Him, as the great mystic philosopher of Islam, Ibn 'Arabi said, "God remains God howsoever He may descend in His creation, and man remains man howsoever he may be exalted in his spiritual ascent."

The result of belief in Incarnation was the degradation of God without thereby exalting man. The function of prophethood also got confused. A prophet held to be God Almighty Himself ceases to be an exemplar for humanity: only human beings could serve as exemplars for struggling humanity that suffers from conflicts. If a man were God Himself, what example could he offer to sinners and their temptations? Men want to know how some great number of their species emerged from darkness and light and how they advanced gradually by constant seeking and groping. In this respect a man like Muhammad certainly provides an inspiring example. The Book that he gave to the world as divinely inspired depicts him as a seeker and finder, very much as it depicts Abraham contemplating the phenomena of Nature in search of an abiding reality.

(Did He not) find you unable to see and showed the way?
(xciii. 7).

You did not know what the Book was and what the faith was (xlvi. 52).

Abraham, Moses and Jesus as men divinely inspired and commissioned, and not gods themselves. Muḥammad's conception of Reality is "Infinity within and Infinity without", revealed only imperfectly in finite and mortal beings. Man can know only so much as God reveals to him through his senses, through his reason and through special intuitions and divinely granted revelations; but even after all this he cannot comprehend the totality of Reality. Intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection is also an ever-receding horizon like all ultimate ideals whose very nature is never to be completely actualised. Muḥammad is an exemplar, not because he claimed to have attained perfection in knowledge and spirituality, but because of his humility before the Infinite and because of his constant striving through prayer and through living to replace the good by the better and the better by the best. He summed up his outlook on life by this pithy saying: "He whose two days are alike is a loser." This is exactly the teaching that Longfellow has put in a stanza in his famous poem, "The Psalm of Life":

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
 Is our destined end or way;
 But to act, that each tomorrow
 Finds us farther than today.

It is universally acknowledged by historians of religion that Muḥammad had been most successful of all the Prophets; it should be added to this that he had been the most practical of all the Prophets. In so far as the general principles of morality are concerned, civilised humanity has been in agreement; it is in their interpretation and implementation that differences in cultures and creeds and conduct of individuals and groups arise. Even in the closer analysis and connotation of these general principles people begin to differ so vastly that what was naively taken to be a simple and self-evident concept turns out to be full of snags. The Sophists of Greece subjectivised all truth and

morality. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle spent a whole lifetime in establishing the objectivity of truth and morals, but with all their acute dialectic they could not clarify the simple concept of justice. Even if they had succeeded in their attempt at theoretical clarification what use would it be to common humanity? In Plato's *Republic* a utopian or fascist pattern of social justice is presented whose unpracticability was so obvious that people had to say that it was only a pattern in heaven. It is doubtful if there ever was a man who improved his virtues by the study of theoretical ethics; the analysis of the Good never made anyone actually good. The ineffectiveness of sermons is also a commonly accepted fact and cynics prescribe listening to sermons as a cure for insomnia; a clergyman is said to have used the preparation of a sermon also as an effective inducer of sleep. If a religious man ever affects the lives of others spiritually it is not by what he says but what he is and what he does. Human beings do not judge each other by the principles that are avowed by them but by the shape those principles take in their conduct.

The Prophet of Islam did not very much theorise about moral concepts. If he wanted people to be just, he would define justice in a very simple and easily understood manner, and then put a content in that form by exercising justice himself in a variety of situations. If he exhorted them to be loving and forgiving, he would not simply discuss the psychology or metaphysics of love but demonstrate this virtue in a variety of practical dealings. We find beautiful ideas and ideals in the founders of great religions as well as in the writings of philosophers, and great literature is replete with idealism. But when we desire to know in what way and to what extent the lives of these teachers reflected what they taught, we are most often disappointed. Buddha has nothing to offer to us in the realm of civilisation or culture. His ethics is full of negative morality because his ultimate goal was the

negation of life, and that is impossible of any positive amelioration. What could a seeker learn from him about the problems of family life or economics or politics, or about war and peace? Jesus preached love so idealistically that his followers, even after two milleniums, are still confused how to build criminal jurisprudence on the Sermon on the Mount which, though applicable with good effect in certain individual cases, can offer no guidance about crime and punishment. He attempted no legal reform and exhorted the law-ridden Jews not to alter a jot or tittle of it, although Mosaic Law needed considerable modification to accord with Jesus's spirit of liberality and universal love. We have very scanty material about the life of Jesus covering only about three years of his ministry, and a considerable part of that scanty material too has become suspect due to researches of the last one hundred years. It is now openly acknowledged even by some bishops and archbishops that Gospel record in many places does not present Jesus as he really was, but what superstitions of narrow minds understood or felt about him. They could believe about Jesus that he drew out evil spirits from the bodies of human beings and inserted them into the bodies of innocent pigs. This is neither rationality nor love nor justice, but this is recorded about a high-souled man like Jesus whom the Gospels intend to present as a saviour and as an exemplar. Soon after Jesus all law was repudiated as having been transcended by Love, forgetting what Jesus was believed to have said about the scrupulous observance of all law both in letter and spirit. For about three centuries the persecuted Christians would have nothing to do about Law or civilisation ; they were expecting a speedy end of all this sorry scheme of things by an apocalyptic event and the return of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. They had given up the Mosaic Law and would not acknowledge Roman Law ; and this total negation did not seem to bother them very much because they had

mentally and practically detached themselves from life around them ; only negative morality was left for them. They remembered the injunctions of Jesus about Love and tried to practise them in dealings with one another, but they could not fulfil the demands of positive and creative love which is not a passive sentiment but a force to enrich life and all its aspects, and reform and remodel it. Negative morality and unpractical spirituality end inevitably in life-negating asceticism. Jesus could offer them no practical guidance about law or politics or economics ; he had not bothered about these things and concluded that they were not worth bothering about. In the beginning clergymen were allowed to marry and had families to look after, but gradually the logic of renunciation drew them towards celibacy. Why procreate in a world which is the realm of the Devil and is doomed ? As Jesus was an unmarried man they thought that the imitation of Christ demanded celibacy. Family life may be led by unregenerate laity because, according to Paul, "It was better to marry than to burn."

When after three centuries the conversion of Constantine made Christianity the State religion, Christianity was compelled to have laws as a judicial system ; it had to deal with the question of peace and war ; economic life too had to be regulated. The Church now had to do what Jesus had left undone. Christendom had to work out the solution of all problems according to its own light. How the Church continued to bungle about them when it was a universally dominant institution and how till today hundreds of Churches continue to grapple with them in conflict and confusion is a matter of history.

Islam as a religion succeeded better than others because it stood on a more solid ground. It offered a complete code of life and presented a system, invariable in its fundamentals but adaptive and dynamic in the changing circumstances of different epochs and nations. To substantiate this claim we will try to give

briefly the foundations of Islamic ethics. It shall be followed by precepts and injunctions taken from the Qur'an and supplemented by the sayings and teachings of the Prophet. Efforts will be made to give examples from the conduct of the Prophet to see how it accorded with the principles enunciated by him.

Religion and Morality. The question of the relation of religion to morality has been answered differently by different religions. In Indian religions generally morality has been accorded a very subordinate place. According to the law of Karma, actions produce their results by an inexorable law of moral causation and, in accordance with belief in transmigration of the soul, birth after birth lives on determined by the consequences of the previous life. A man may be born in a lower or a higher caste in a good or bad family or may be born as a lower or a higher animal in accordance with his deeds. But life, by itself, is an illusion and an evil and the ultimate purpose of life is its own negation. This purpose cannot be achieved by moral living because good actions too shall produce their results for which a birth, in however exalted a state, shall be necessary and there will be no riddance. Only realisation of the illusoriness of all existence and the knowledge of identification of the individual soul with the universal soul can result in salvation. An individual who has attained to this knowledge is already saved and needs no moral life, although the presumption is that such an enlightened sage will not lead an immoral life. The Buddhistic view of life and *Nirvana* in final analysis are almost identical. When we come to Christianity we see that Jesus was a moral teacher of a very high order. He wanted to turn the Jews from mere legalism and external observances to correct attitudes of the spirit. He desired legality and morality to be internalised and founded in universal love. He attempted to save people from the superficialities and inanities of a hypocritically religious life. On account of his effort he must be acknowledged as one of the great saviours of mankind.

According to his teaching, the person who is pure in spirit and is imbued with the love of God and Man is saved as he has inherited the Kingdom of Heaven. But Christian dogma, developed under influences foreign to the spirit and outlook of Jesus, converted his life and teaching into mysteries. The dogmatists invented the doctrine of Original Sin first committed by Adam and Eve and then transmitted to the entire human race. Jesus had taught that God is love, but these dogmatists made the God of Jesus so unjust and unforgiving that he would have gone on visiting the consequences of the sins of the first progenitors on entire humanity till the Doomsday if he had not thought of the means to deliver them. Depraved humanity could not save itself by virtuous living because the inherited taint was too deeply ingrained in its nature. The stern and unforgiving God had to show His love for man by another unjust and cruel act. His own eternally innocent son had to appease the will of God by his suffering and death offered as an atonement for the sins of mankind. After this act too only that portion of humanity can be saved that believes in this Vicarious Atonement ; for the rest no amount of virtuous living can guarantee salvation. The entire basis of this dogma for which no basis can be found in the teachings of Jesus is a product of pagan creeds and mysteries, and is fundamentally immoral because morality rests on the responsibility of the individual for his own actions. To use a Christian idiom, everyone must bear his own cross ; how could, then, the cross of Jesus atone for the sins of entire humanity ? Those who suffer for truth offer noble examples to others, but they cannot atone for the misdeeds of others, as according to the dogma of Original Sin the misdeeds are not those actually committed by individuals by a free choice but are inherited by them as a result of the First Slip. All the great Israelite Prophets had been presenting a just and loving God and emphasising moral living as the only demand of God. Jesus did the same, but Christian dogma changed

this outlook entirely and based salvation, not on moral living, but on belief in irrational dogma, thereby divorcing morality from religion. At the advent of Islam such were the attitudes of major world religions towards morality.

It was Islam which placed morality in the centre of religion. Surely, according to Islam, religion is not completely identical with morality. Spiritual communion with God that can lead to transcendental experiences, attuning the finite to the infinite, is something more and higher than love and harmony in human relations or resolving the inner conflicts of an individual. But man cannot attain to these heights without a firm foundation of virtuous living. *Bukhārī* has related two sayings of the Prophet according to which good deeds are about three quarters of religion, and the *Qur'ān* has repeated it in many places that mere faith that is not allied with virtuous deeds is of no avail.

In order that moral life may be possible there are two fundamental requisites. First, there should be no innate corruption in human nature and, secondly, man should be initially endowed with free will, so that every individual may be held responsible for his actions. The doctrines of Original Sin and Atonement are both emphatically repudiated by the *Qur'ān*. God has given the best constitution to man both mentally and physically. "Certainly We created man in the best make" (xcv. 4). According to the *Qur'ān*, the foundations of truth are imbedded in the nature of man; true religion has only to be awakened from the depths of the human soul; the unalterable Truth which constitutes true religion is there before it is corrupted by a wrong exercise of free will: "Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation: that is the right religion, but most people do not know" (xxx. 30).

Having been endowed with the best constitution

and reason and free will, man is made individually responsible for his own actions ; every soul is pledged to bear the consequences of its actions : "Every man is responsible for what he shall have wrought" (iii. 21) ; "And a burdened soul cannot bear the burden of another" (xxxv. 18). Commenting on these verses of the Qur'an, the Prophet is reported to have said : "A son is not responsible for the crime of his father, nor is a father responsible for the crime of the son."

Hinduism and Buddhism taught that human beings are born burdened with the consequences of their actions in previous lives, and dogmatized Christianity said that every human child is born with the ineradicable perversion of its nature. Islam contradicted these pessimistic doctrines and said that human beings are born just with human nature with great potentialities both for good and evil. The ways of good and evil lie open before it, and human nature, if not preverted by social environment, irrational biases and wrong use of free will, is naturally endowed with the insight to the difference between good and evil.

Surely We have created man from a small life-germ uniting (itself) : We mean to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing. Surely We have shown him the way : he may be thankful or unthankful (lxvi. 2-3).

And the soul and its perfection, so He intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its guarding (against evil) ; he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it (xc. 7-10).

Besides the religious truth that is revealed to Prophets to strengthen rational tendencies and to extend the scope of faith to unseen realities, the Qur'an gives us a conception of natural religion in the verses quoted above. The Prophet amplified it by saying that creeds that human beings follow are not accepted by an individual's natural reason but are imposed on children by their parents ; without this parental or group pressure or social conditioning no one would be a Magi or a Jew or a Christian. When

a person says, "I believe in such and such a religion, he deceives himself into the belief that he has accepted this creed by voluntary and free choice having found it the best of all the prevalent religions." The fact, on the other hand, is that he is only believing in his parents ; the child was born just with bare human nature with its instincts and' potentialities—all the rest is the result of conditioning : "All children are born of (pure) nature ; it is the parents who make them Jews, Christians or Magians" (Bukhārī).

Most Christians believe that unbaptised children go to Hell, or remain unsaved. The Prophet of Islam would not accept this cruel view which presents God as more unjust and callous than the most unjust of human beings. How could a believer in such a God be himself just and forgiving ? Jesus had said about children : "Let them come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," but cruel dogma made these innocents a fuel for the fire of Hell. The Prophet's outlook was confirmed by a vision that he had. He saw that Abraham was sitting in Paradise surrounded by little children and remarked that they were the children who died in the state of natural religion. When he related this vision to his Companions, they asked, "Even if they were the children of infidel idolaters ?" The Prophet replied in the affirmative. Whenever the Prophet talked about a person whose supremely virtuous deeds had completely wiped away the effects of his sins, he used the phrase: "He became sinless as on the day when his mother gave him birth."

Socrates and Plato also had a similar view about human nature. In the *Republic*, Plato attempts to demonstrate his doctrine that truths are innate in human nature, and the process of education consists only in drawing them out ; all true knowledge in this sense is reminiscence. It was also his view that human nature seeks naturally only what is good, and when a man commits an evil deed he momentarily mistakes the evil for something good ; wrongdoing is a product of

ignorance. This is an ultra-intellectualist view of human nature which ignores the force of repeatedly willed actions which harden into compelling habits. In human choices there is a volitional as well as a cognitive element as actions are the results of the interaction of the two. Islam has laid emphasis on both, urging human beings to strive to increase their knowledge, and to strengthen their character by acquiring good habits, through repetition and multiplication of good deeds. Mere abstract knowledge or faith unexpressed in deeds cannot improve human life. Knowledge develops by thinking, but character develops through action. Islam prohibited monkery because an ascetic loses the opportunity of character-building by segregating himself from the challenges of life ; asceticism or avoidance of normal human activities can lead only to morbidity as is amply borne out by the history of asceticism in all religions that preached and practised flight from life. Islam alone among the great world religions categorically forbade monkery and ascetic flight from life. The life of the Prophet as well as that of his associate builders of Islam was a life of constant struggle and a lesson in patience and perseverance. The ascetic continues to struggle morbidly with his own natural instincts and resorts to cruel self-mortification in the expectation that thereby he would save his soul ; but the soul becomes diseased instead of gaining health. The Prophet is reported to have said that a Muslim who lives in human intercourse bearing patiently the shafts of hostility is much superior to the one who does not mix with people and does not bear their persecution.

With respect to morals as well as worship, Islam is a religion of the "middle of the road". The Muslim community is called in the Qur'an *Ummat-ul-Wasata*. Here too there is something in common between the Greek and the Muslim ethics. Aristotle developed the doctrine of the mean that virtue lies between the two extremes of excess and defect. His book gives many

examples in support of this thesis. Healthy feeding lies between the starvation of the ascetic and the excessive indulgence of the gourmand ; courage lies between cowardice and rashness, and so on. In general, Mosaic religion had become a creed of legalism, ritualism and stern justice untempered with mercy, making the Jews hard-hearted. Jesus and Muhammad both reprimanded them for having made religion devoid of love and depleted it of spirit. To remedy this disease Jesus preached love, forgiveness and extreme non-violence. They were asked not to resist evil with force but to yield to the aggressor who slaps your face or takes away your garment or drives you in forced labour, so that he gets ashamed of his conduct and is conquered by love. He taught them not only to love their friends but also to love their enemies. The indiscriminate massacre of enemies inculcated in the Old Testament was one extreme and totally yielding to the enemy and attempting to love him was the other extreme. In one case law was loveless and in the other case love was lawless. Islam adopted the middle path of inculcating justice tempered with mercy. Society cannot be held together without law and justice, nor can life be refined and spiritualised without love. Islam also gave a legal system but in every case softened the rigour of law so that it might not enchain life instead of promoting its legitimate liberties. Mosaic law inflicted death penalty even for small offences ; a disobedient son could also be killed and many another transgression of which no judicial notice could be taken was punishable with death. The Sabbath could be violated by a hundred different kinds of acts minutely listed, and the doer of many an innocent and necessary deed was to be crucified. This was one of the charges against Jesus that he did not respect the Sabbath, against which he protested saying that Sabbath was made for man and not man for Sabbath. If you compare Mosaic Law with Islamic Law as given in the Qur'an or promulgated by the Prophet,

you could see how in almost all cases Islamic Law was more humane and more liberal. The Qur'ān declared that its mission was to remove chains and halters from the body of humanity, to grant it legitimate liberty within, what the Qur'ān calls, "the limits of God". The eternal source-book of the Islamic Law is the Qur'ān, but the entire body of civil, criminal and religious law does not cover more than half a dozen pages. But in almost all cases the rigidity has been removed by rational and liberal latitudes. For instance, fasting for a month is prescribed for all, but travellers and people not in normal state of health or physically weak are excused. In the interest of justice monogamy is recommended but in exceptional circumstances polygamy is allowed with a strict injunction to do equal justice to more than one wedded wife. In the Mosaic Law polygamy was so unlimited that Solomon the Wise could legally have one thousand wives and concubines. Islam was not the first religion to allow polygamy, but it was the first religion to restrict it and hedge it in with severe conditions. Mosaic Law inculcated only justice according to laws that were severe, and Jesus inculcated only love and goodwill. Islam combined the two in a healthy synthesis softening the rigour of law and enjoining love and forgiveness wherever possible without violating the sanctity of law. Mosaic Law emphasised '*adl* (justice) and Jesus inculcated *ihsān* (benevolence), but the Qur'ān combined the two in one command : "God enjoins on you justice and benevolence". (xvi. 90).

The Qur'ān in many respects is a synthesis of law and love, and Muhammad combines in himself the traits of Moses and Jesus. This will become evident from the following verse :

O you who believe ! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain : the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female (ii. 178).

This was the law of Moses about murder and retali-

atory punishment ; according to this a murderer had to lose his life. But in the tribal conditions of Arabia this stern law could not have created peace ; as every murder would start a chain of murders in unending revenge, the Qur'an allowed that if the relatives of the murdered would not insist on the murderer being killed in retaliation but would accept monetary compensation for the economic loss suffered on account of the loss of a life, it would stop further feuds and vendettas. It is expressly stated that it is a softening of the Mosaic Law of stern retaliatory justice :

But if any remission is made to anyone by his aggrieved brother, then prosecution (for blood-wit) should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner; this is an alleviation for your Lord and a mercy; so whoever exceeds the limit after this, he shall have a painful chastisement (ii. 178).

Where such tribal conditions do not exist and the best way of dealing with cold-blooded murder is capital punishment, the State could inflict it according to the view expressed in the Qur'an that unlawful murder is not a crime perpetrated merely against an individual but it is tantamount to the murdering of entire humanity by violating the sanctity of life.

The Prophet was personally averse to severe punishments and mere retaliatory justice unless the circumstances were such that leniency would encourage crime. The Prophet's wife 'A'ishah relates that she never saw him exercising retaliation for personal injury to himself. The Prophet's attendant Anas relates that he never saw the Prophet adjudicating a case of murder or injury on which he did not advise the injured party to desist from retaliation and be satisfied with compensation or exercise forgiveness outright. He advised the Muslims to settle their disputes among themselves amicably without rushing to law, because if a matter is referred to him for judicial decision, punishment of the culprit according to law will become inevitable ;

love and forgiveness must precede an appeal to law ; upholding the majesty of law is equally necessary for all-round security of life. It is related by Abū Dāwūd in *Kitāb-ul-Hudūd* that while a man was asleep someone took away his covering sheet; the man awoke and caught him. The thief was brought before the Prophet who sentenced him to be punished for theft. The owner of the sheet pitying the thief said to the Prophet that the punishment was much too drastic for a small theft ; to save the man he proposed to sell that sheet to him on credit. The Prophet said, "Why did you not do it before handing him over to the law ?"

We give below a few verses of the Qur'ān which teach humanity the respective places of law and love in human relations :

And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that which you were afflicted ; but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient (xvi. 126).

And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from Allah ; surely He does not love the unjust (xlvi. 40).

Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant. And if a false imputation from the Devil afflict you, seek refuge in Allah ; surely He is Hearing, Knowing (vii. 199-200).

In many places the suppression of anger is given as the quality of piety and nobility and flaring up at personal injury or insult is designated as incitement of the Devil in man :

And whenever they are angry they forgive (xlvi. 37).

And those who restrain (their anger) and pardon men ; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others) (iii. 133).

Bearing wrongs patiently and exercising forgiveness is a worthy habit of magnanimity which characterises great Prophets and noble souls :

And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is of the affairs the doing of which should be determined upon (xlvi. 43).

Therefore bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with constancy bear up with patience (xlvi. 35).

Enjoin good and forbid evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you : surely this is one of the affairs earnestly enjoined (xxxi. 17).

Say to the believers that they forgive those who do not believe in the judgment of God (xlv. 14).

They should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you ? Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (xxiv. 22).

An injured person, according to verse 126 of Sūrah xvi quoted above, has a right to inflict an equal amount of injury personally or legally, but forgiveness is recommended as a better course. Now in the following verses we are told that pain, even if rightfully inflicted, is after all an evil and evil can never be equated with good. It would be better, therefore, if one's reaction to evil is not the infliction of an equal evil but something good instead. Rewarding evil with goodness is ultimately better for both parties ; it will remove enmity and replace it with warm friendship ; but only people endowed with the magnificent quality of patience can return good for evil :

And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo ! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend. And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune (xli. 34-35).

They shall be granted their reward twice, because they are steadfast and they repel evil with good and spend out of what We have given them. And when they hear idle talk they turn aside from it and say : We shall have our deeds and you shall have your deeds : peace be on you, we do not desire the ignorant (xxviii. 54-55).

It is reported by Hudhaifah that the Prophet said : "Don't imitate or reproduce the treatment that you receive ; you say that if people do good to you, you will do good to them, and if they injure you, you will injure them ; this is not right : remain self-possessed and undisturbed—if they do good to you, do good to them and if they treat you badly, even then don't return evil for evil."

And you shall always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them ; so pardon them and turn away ; surely Allah loves those who do good (to others) (v. 13).

Even constant repetition of the teaching about forgiveness and returning good for evil would have remained in the realm of high-sounding preaching if the Prophet had not himself set an example in practising it in numerous circumstances in which ordinary mortals would have found it impossible to forgive. He forgave his enemies when he was poor, weak and persecuted, and he forgave them when the tyrants were in his grip. After his entry into Mecca the whole populace, of tyrants and murderers, was forgiven. He forgave the man who had pursued him in his flight to Medina to capture or kill him for a reward of one hundred camels ; he forgave the Jewess of Khaibar who had poisoned him ; his forgiveness was extended to the murderer of his dear uncle Hamzah, to the cruel woman Hind, the wife of Abū Sufyān, who had eaten the liver of the murdered Hamzah ; to the man who had killed his daughter ; to a gang of Quraish, caught in the valley of Tamīm, who had come out to slay him. He prayed for the assaulters of Ta'if who had stoned him and bathed him in blood, and he sought the blessing of God on those who had wounded him in the face in the Battle of Uhud. To those who wanted him to curse his enemies, he replied "I have been sent to bless and not to curse."

Muhammad, from the beginning of his mission to the end of his life, encountered bitter hostility from idolatrous tribes and religious communities like the Jews. When peaceful persuasion failed, force had to be employed. To many a critic of Islam the attempt to crush the aggressors appears as an obvious contradiction of forgiveness and forbearance ; they think that a prophet remains a prophet so long as he passively submits to persecution and tyranny but ceases to be a man of God when he stands up to fight for the right. This is surely a very unjust judgment. He wanted to live

in peace with those who would not believe in him but granted him the right to preach and practise his faith. All civilised nations include this right on the list of fundamental human rights. Does not the denial of this right entitle an individual or a group to use all means to crush those who deny it? Muhammad was compelled to fight battles to establish this right, not only for himself and his followers, but even for those who differed from him. He entered into covenants of peaceful co-existence with the polytheists as well as the Jewish community and would never treat these treaties as scraps of paper to be torn when powerful enough to do so.

Except those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, then they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you, so fulfil their agreement to the end of their term; surely Allah loves those who are careful of their duty (ix. 4).

But the tribal and religious groups could not appreciate the purpose of Islam and felt it to be a threat to their creeds and ways of life. Islam fell so much in agreement with what it believed to be the true religion of the Israelite Prophets and Jesus that it had no intention of clashing with Jews and Christians. The Qur'an praises the Torah and the Gospels as effulgent with Divine Light and says that if the Jews and Christians had followed them honestly, God's blessings would have rained on them from every side. The Qur'an speaks with considerable appreciation about pious Jews and Christians, always honouring them by calling them the "People of the Book" meaning thereby the followers of divinely-revealed Scriptures. While living peacefully together with the Muslims they have a complete guarantee of following their faith and being judged by their own laws; Islam did not propose to impose its legislation on those who had their own systems of law. Islam is an ideological movement and it found an Ideological State. If you insist on calling it a theocracy, it was a very novel kind of theocracy.

which allowed other theocracies to live side by side with itself in peaceful accord. Not understanding this type of liberalism that the world had never witnessed or imagined, even the "People of the Book"—to whom Muhammad felt so akin and so friendly—tried to destroy Islam either by open armed attacks or by intrigues and alliances with its enemies. Under these circumstances Islam, which had enjoined the Muslims to have intimate social and even marital relations with them, was obliged to advise the Muslims to beware of them so long as these group clashes continued just as even modern governments issue orders against fraternisation with the enemy during war conditions for fear of sabotage. But when peace is firmly established such prohibitory orders are withdrawn and positive attempts are made towards closer social as well as political alliance. Islam and the Qur'an can be understood rightly only by placing them in their historical perspective. The Qur'an claims to be a Divine revelation ; it asserts that if this were not so one would find it full of contradictions. Those who try to disprove its Divine origin make all sorts of attempts to pick up its different injunctions and fragments which do not seem to go well together : in one place you are asked to be tolerant and forgiving and in another place you are asked to strike hard at the enemy ; in one place the omnipotence of the will of God is emphasised and almost in the same breath man is held responsible for his actions because of having been endowed with free will. Sometimes one piece of legislation seems to contradict another piece. To solve these difficulties one has to keep two things in mind. The first is the simple fact that Reality is much richer in the variety and diversity of its different aspects than Aristotle's logic of identity. Hegel's dynamic logic gives a better picture of Reality wherein the Absolute unfolds itself through an infinite chain of the triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Islam met through its career of about two decades many a thesis and many an antithesis and constantly trans-

cended these into a series of syntheses. Wherever there is life there is creative evolution ; the life-urge creates conditions as well as adapts itself to them ; it is creative and adaptive at the same time. Islam preached peace and had to fight for it. This is consistent with the demands of life, though apparently self-contradictory. About the kind of consistency demanded by fools, Emerson, the literary sage of America, rightfully observed that consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Such fools would find Jesus very inconsistent preaching unconditional love and forgiveness in thought, word and deed on the one hand, and calling his opponents as a generation of vipers, preaching non-violence when you are struck on the cheek and your garment is taken away and himself using violence in using a scourge to upset the stalls of money-changers in the courtyard of the temple ; or claiming to be "the Prince of Peace" and saying at the same time that he has brought not peace but the sword. If all this is true about Jesus and not held to be contradictory, then surely there are no basic contradictions in the life and teachings of Muhammad or different verses of the Qur'ān which deal with different situations and different aspects of life. Consistency lies in the invariable truths which have to be implemented and actualised in the relativities of every changing human condition.

When groups are engaged in hot or cold war the individuals of one group cease to have normal relations with the individuals of the other group ; hostility or suspicion is so all-pervading that everyone has to be on his guard. When the antagonism is ideological, the dividing point ceases to be racial, familial or national ; brothers and fathers and sons may find themselves in opposite camps as it actually happened in the Battle of Badr. When Jews and Christians read a verse in the Qur'ān advising the Muslims involved in group clashes not to develop intimacies with them, they pick up this verse out of its context and offer it as a textual proof of Islamic intolerance or fanaticism.

They can understand why the idolatrous Arabs are to be shunned, but they do not understand why the hand of friendship should not be extended to the People of the Book on the best of whom the Qur'an has showered so much praise for their honesty, humility and godliness. They forget that this temporary injunction of avoidance refers to groups in war conditions. When normal peaceful conditions, that make friendly co-existence possible, are established, people are enjoined to be good and kind to one another irrespective of creedal differences or differences in the way of life. Islam in this respect said or did nothing more than what Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is reported to have said in the Gospels :

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword (St Matthew, x. 34).

We find in the Qur'an in different contexts an appeal to keep peace so long as the enemies are willing to stick to their undertaking :

Those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, then they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you, so fulfil their agreement to the end of their term (ix. 4).

O ye who believe ! be upright for Allah, bearers of witnesses with justice, and let not the hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably ; act equitably, that is nearer to piety (v. 8).

Group prejudices are so deep-rooted that the psychology of a good and honest individual is affected by them. As a patriot exclaimed on the condition of clashes with other countries : "My country, right or wrong," that he would stand by it against others irrespective of the rightness or wrongness of the cause, he was voicing a fact of collective non-moral egoism. Clashing groups are immoral or non-moral and during the war most of the heinous crimes are not only tolerated and practised but actually encouraged and praised ; a person normally truthful, peaceful and kind commits abominable acts without the least compunc-

tion of conscience if such acts, directly or indirectly, are believed to be conducive to success against the enemy.

Islam would have made no contribution towards the humanising of the collective psychology of groups if it had inculcated or tolerated all that hostile groups do in a phase of violent hostility. War requires strategy and tactics ; giving wrong impressions to the enemy, about your objectives and movements, is a necessary part of this unpalatable game ; even a saint or a prophet who is fighting a battle has to do this. War cannot be made completely humane at a high level ; the best that any creed or ideology can teach or accomplish is to mitigate if not completely annihilate

of justice; it is the essence of justice to be uniform and universal making no distinction between friends and foes; justice is not a respecter of persons. The Qur'an has repeatedly exhorted its followers to be on guard lest the enmity of a group inclines you to be unjust to it. As a result of this teaching ordinary non-Muslim citizens stood in the court on equal footing with men like 'Alī and 'Umar and the court judged their cases impartially. Once 'Umar, head of a powerful republic, appeared in the court as a party and the Qādī stood up to show courtesy to his august person. 'Umar rebuked him by saying that he had started with injustice by showing courtesy to him not shown to the other party; in a court of law administering justice the highest and the lowest stand on equal footing.

O you who believe! be upright to Allah, bearers of witnesses with justice, and let not the hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah (v. 8).

In a tradition reported by Abū Hurairah, the Prophet said that he was ordered to follow nine principles, one of which was to keep the rule of equity and justice in all circumstances.

Allah loves those who judge equitably (v. 42).

Do not follow (your) low desires, lest you violate the law of equity (iv. 135).

9

THE RELIGION OF LOVE

ISLAM is essentially a religion of love—God's love for man and man's love for God and man's love for man and entire creation. Love is the ground as well as the goal of all genuinely spiritual religions. The Qur'ān begins by calling God *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* generally translated in English as Beneficent and Merciful, but the word *Rahmah* in Arabic, from which both these words are derived, has very comprehensive connotation comprising love, mercy, blessing and many another cognate sentiment and attitude. God is the embodiment of the highest of human ideals. If a man is mean and low-minded, he pulls down his God to his own level. Merely professing to believe in God does not make a man moral or spiritual, maybe a God he professes to believe in is neither wise nor just nor forgiving or loving. Therefore, the opening verses of the Qur'ān which repeat God's attribute as *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* twice praise exclusively that Being whose characteristic is being *Rabb*, another untranslatable word with a very rich connotation, meaning Lord, as well as Nourisher and Developer of all creatures in every realm of existence (*Rabb-ul-'Ālamīn*). God the Creative Force of life is no blind *elan vital*; Creative Activity, which is the essential attribute of God, is a goal-seeking activity directed towards the realisation of ideals and ends. God's love creates existence as a cosmos regulated according to laws. Besides physical laws, love also creates moral laws which become basic at the human level, and men are to be judged by them and their life determined by them. God, therefore, is

also the Lord of Judgment. This second attribute is derived; it is secondary in comparison with God's attribute of Creative Love. He is *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* and *Rabb* before being a Judge; as His laws originate in Love, so his judgment is informed and imbued with Love. It is only about Love (*Rahmah*) that it is said in the Qur'ān that it comprehends everything and every being (vii. 156). This does not mean that God loves good and evil alike. If His love is creative and ameliorative, he cannot love any being or anything that negates the ideals of life. To illustrate what God's love really means we quote below a few verses of the Qur'ān which would clarify the concept of Divine Love in Islam :

God is the friend of those who have faith (iii. 67).
Verily God loves the doer of good (ii. 195; v. 13).
Verily God loves those who repent (ii. 222).
Verily God loves those who put their trust in Him (iii. 158).
Verily God loves the just (v. 42; xl ix. 9).
Verily God loves the pious (iii. 75).
God loves those who exercise patience and perseverance (iii. 145).
God loves those who love cleanliness (ix. 108).
God loves those who fight for His cause (lx i. 4).

If God loves all these qualities, He could surely not love the negation of these qualities nor the persons who in their conduct repudiate these qualities : "God does not love those who deny Him" (iii. 31), not because He as a person is insulted or injured by this denial, but because this denial in thought and deed lowers the denier himself in the scale of life :

God does not love the transgressors (ii. 190).
God does not love the conceited, boastful man (iv. 36).
God does not love the sinful violater of trust (iv. 107).
God does not love the mischievous disturbers of peace (xxviii. 77).
God does not love the extravagant (vi. 142).
God does not love the supercilious (xvi. 23).
God does not love the unjust (xl ii. 40).
God does not love the ungrateful sinner (ii. 276).

The above quotations prove beyond the shadow of doubt that in Islam religion is identified with high moral ideals that stand for the improvement of human life, and God Who creates and sustains life is worshipped as a loving God because He creates all the means whereby creative love can purify and exalt life in all its noble aspects. Islam is not based on mysteries and miracles, myths or legends, nor does it demand belief in irrational or ultra-rational dogmas towards which reason or moral sense of man does not point. It is a religion of the values of life ; God is the source, guarantor and conserver of these values in whose realisation man is asked to co-operate. Whether God loves man or man loves God, it is not merely a person-to-person relation of passive sentimentality ; it is an active creative force which purifies and exalts man both in belief and in conduct. Islam is both theism and humanism, because, besides concerning itself primarily with the exaltation of human life as it is lived on this planet, it also roots itself in the belief that the intrinsic values of human life are not fortuitous and merely a chance product in an otherwise non-moral or immoral Reality, but are essential and abiding elements in the structure of divinely-created Nature. In the triad of Love—God's love for man and His creations, man's love for God and His creations and man's love for man—the entire faith of Islam and its code of life is summed up. Doing anything for the love of God means connecting that act with the realisation of the highest ends of life ; acts unconnected with faith in high ideals become either mechanical or neutral or are done at a merely low biological level. Socrates said that unexamined life is unworthy of a rational being and man's pursuit of the good should be actuated by the urge to realise eternal and abiding values whose pyramid culminates at the apex in the Eternal Reality which he and Plato call the Good. Islamic theism identifies the Good with God Who does not transcend the world of change in will-less transcendence, but the Good in Him is positive, purposive and creative. In

the Ultimate Reality, love is the creative urge of goods or values. According to the Qur'an, what is not done consciously in the service of the Ideal does not feed the spirit. Egoistic and narrow aims of life do not exalt the soul and leave no abiding spiritual impress even if ostensibly the act does not appear to be harmful. Charity, for instance, even if it benefits the recipient materially, may be vitiated spiritually by insulting the recipient in trying to make him feel that he has been placed under an obligation, or it may be vitiated because of the urge to show off and get praised for being charitable:

O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his property to be seen of men (ii. 264).

Such actions without any faith in the abiding ideal may be likened to a mirage which makes a traveller thirstier still in his useless hot pursuit. Only the pursuit of a noble selfless ideal quenches the thirst of the spirit :

And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water, until, when he comes to it, he finds it to be naught (xxiv. 39).

As we have said above, the love of God is not the kind of enjoyment of human lovers which is sentimental, intoxicating, exhilarating and ecstatic, and is confined to two persons; it is an egoism of the two. Some mystics enjoyed this feeling having personalised God analogous to themselves and considered this ecstasy as the highest of spiritual states. It is difficult to assess the reality and validity of this experience, but on the common non-mystical level the love of God manifests itself in the love of intrinsic values and the highest ideals of life which are human and Divine at the same time. When we say that somebody did something for the love of God it means really that he did it in the service of the Ideal without any regard to his narrow personal

egoistic interests. When he does this his spirit is lifted up and his finitude gets into tune with universality and infinity, and assimilating abiding values confer immortality on his spirit. On the contrary, even great and useful actions done from lower personal motives degrade the soul and relate it to the realm of transience. Actions can be judged spiritually only by their motivation. A number of sayings of the Prophet point to this truth. In the realm of material and biological causation, causes produce their effects invariably. Lower personal motivation, having no reference to abiding universal values, is called in the vocabulary of the Qur'ān *Thawāb al-Dunyā*, seeking merit in the lower world and demanding cash and immediate material benefits ; seeking higher values is called *Thawāb al-Ākhirah*, seeking merit in the Hereafter. Whoever seeks his reward in the lower world of material causation is bound to get it if he uses the means proper to its attainment, but he forfeits all spiritual merit because what he did he did for self-love at a low egoistic level ; as he was not actuated by the love of universal and abiding values he gets no share in the life of the spirit. We quote one of the numerous verses that emphasise this warning :

Whoever desire this world's life and its finery, We will pay them in full their deeds therein, and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of this. These are they for whom there is nothing but fire in the Hereafter, and what they wrought in it shall go for nothing, and vain is what they do (xi. 15-16).

Illustrating this teaching, Tirmidhī records on the authority of Abū Hurairah that the Prophet said: "On the Last Day when God will sit in judgment and every community shall be kneeling down before Him, the first to be judged shall be the scholars of the Holy Book or those who had been killed in a holy war or those rich and prosperous in the world. God will ask the learned one: 'Were you not taught all that was revealed to the Prophet? What did you do about that knowledge?' He will reply, 'O Lord! I used to recite

the Qur'ān day and night in prayers.' God will say: 'You are a liar'; and so will the angels hold him to be a liar, and God will deliver the judgment that the man was doing all this simply to be praised as a very learned man; that praise he received in the world and got the reward that he aimed at, so for him there is nothing here. Then the rich man will be addressed and God will say: 'Did I not make you prosperous and independent of others? What did you do with that wealth?' He will reply, 'O Lord! I gave to the deserving and was charitable.' God will say: 'You are a liar,' and the angels too would call him a liar. God will say: 'You were not charitable in spirit, you dispensed charity with the sole urge of being praised and honoured. You were praised and honoured, so you have already received the reward you aimed at; there is nothing for you here.' Then will be presented a man killed in a holy war. He expects that God will honour him as a martyr, but his claim will be belied by God Who will say: 'You fought only to be praised as a brave man; you got the praise you desired in the world; there is nothing for you here.' The Prophet added in the end: 'These will be the persons who will be cast into Hell before others.' "

In theological language one would say that none of these persons performed these acts for the love of God. In philosophical language we can say that none of them loved or valued the universal and intrinsic values of life which could be rewarded spiritually; the life of specific attitudes and merely praiseworthy extraneous acts and observances confer no benefit on the spirit.

Let us cast a cursory glance at other great religions and try to understand their concept of love.

Buddhā did not believe in the reality of life and attached no value to it. In his godless metaphysics there could be no question of the love of God for His creatures or the love of man for God. It considered all life to be fundamentally evil and fraught with in-

eradicable pain. Life is a product of desire, so the will to live must be annihilated to reach the transcendent condition of *Nirvana* to which no category of life applies. Living creatures are not to be loved but pitied as victims of cosmic fate. So in Buddhism you have abundance of pity, which is mistaken for love. Love is meant to purify life, to deepen it and to exalt it and to create a beautiful selfless bond between different persons ; it is something positive and creative. But in a creed that holds all existence to be a cruel and tragic illusion—and individuals and persons and God or gods are all parts of the illusion—genuine love could have no place because all love is the love of life and its values and is possible only in a realm of ends and a realm of persons. Love is instrumental in the amelioration of life, but if you believe that life cannot be mended and, therefore, it must be ended, love ceases to have any ameliorative or creative function.

Now let us have a look at Hinduism. It is very difficult to say anything about Hinduism because it is a collective or generic name for a hundred creeds from which it is impossible to derive a common denominator. In the *Vedas* we find a world governed by a large number of gods with all sorts of contradictory and even immoral traits. This is not much different from the world of Homer. The Aryan development of religious consciousness gradually reduces the number of gods until we reach the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Along with this there is philosophic development ending in the neutral monism of *Vendanta*. The individuality of the self along with the rest of existence is declared as *Maya*, cosmic illusion or ignorance (*Avidya*). The purpose of life is to negate the cycle of births and deaths and to get out of the grip of *Karma* or the universal impersonal law of moral causation. The ideal man is the ascetic who has roamed the world having realised its illusoriness and having attained to the knowledge of the identity of the *Atman* and *Parmatman*, the individual and the universal self. In its

polytheism and monism there is no real place for what human beings understand as love. There is the belief in many incarnations, not a single incarnation, as we see in dogmatic Christianity. For instance, the Supreme Reality incarnated in Krishna is depicted in the *Bhagvat Gita* as saying that whenever religion gets corrupted, its truths have to be revived by a fresh incarnation. Pantheistic Hinduism inculcates the development of the vision to see the One in the Many but, in practice, the sentiment of universal love is not derived from it. Love is unitive, but Hinduism drifted into an extremely divisive system pulverising humanity into watertight castes. The entire ethics of Hinduism revolved round the concept of segregation and a thoroughly loveless system in which large portions of humanity cursed by *Karma* were born so utterly corrupt that their touch or even their sight must be avoided by the high-born for fear of pollution. The whole system originated in the desire of the Aryans for maintaining racial superiority over against the conquered and subdued aborigines of India. Along with this, classes were divided according to professions and partition walls erected between them. As there was no loving creator God in Hinduism the religious code like that of Manu's *Dharma Shastra* became the embodiment of human cruelty at its worst. It was recommended to marry boys and girls as infants, but a widowed girl child could not be remarried. The orthodox way was to burn the widow at the funeral pyre of her husband. The widower husband could marry a hundred times over, but the widowed girl was doomed. If she is allowed to live on she should be subjected to every possible humiliation and torture. No woman could ever achieve an independent legal or economic status; she could not inherit and, however corrupt and criminally maltreating a husband may be, the wife could not get a divorce. With respect to the lowest of castes, the Shudras, this religious code was not less cruel. Their status was much worse than that of domestic slaves because being un-

touchable they could not be employed as domestic servants for fear of their polluting touch. We hear much about Hindu spirituality which is held up for our esteem and veneration against the materialism of other creeds and nations. A few individuals who renounce the world are considered to be very spiritual, but they live on receiving homage from society which sanctions and practises this cruel system, moving not a finger to alter it. Those who actively and legally attempt to reform this society are mostly agnostics or secularists. They have embodied fundamental human rights in the Western-inspired new constitution of a free India but, in practice, the orthodox religious consciousness of the masses is untouched. Against the religious code the untouchables can now acquire whatever education they desire or can afford, but the injunction of Manu still remains unaltered in the orthodox code: if a Shudra is found reciting the *Vedas* his tongue should be pulled out and if he is found hearing it moulten lead should be poured into his ears.

With respect to dogmatic Christianity which is a negation of the message and spirit of the real Jesus, we have already expressed our views in a previous chapter. During the course of more than a millennium Israelite prophetic consciousness had advanced from a stern tribal Jehova inexorable in his justice, a Lord of Hosts, who enjoined massacring of whole populations worshipping other gods, to a loving, universal and rational God, even in the outlook of great prophets like Deutero Isaiah before the time of Jesus. In Jesus we have the culminating point of that upward movement where God and religion are completely identified with love which has preference over all legalism and ritualism. But the concept of God and Man was corrupted by the dogma of Original Sin and Atonement. What kind of a loving God could be the creator of sinful humanity, punishing innocents before they have started life, and then crucifying His Eternal Son as the only way of atoning for uncommitted sins? Could a religion

of love send unbaptised children to Hell ?

But life is not directed by dogmas. The inherent goodness of God's good people manifests itself in their lives. Dogmas are only theories and life is much richer than any theory about it. Among the Buddhists, Christians and Hindus one can find very edifying examples of life lovingly devoted to the well-being of all creatures. The love of Jesus, for instance, works in the lives of many Christians irrespective of irrational dogmas with which his religion has been vitiated. Similarly, the lives of good Buddhists are imbued with mercy irrespective of their nihilistic metaphysics. The distinguishing characteristic of Islam is grounding the life of justice, benevolence and love in a type of faith in God and Man which would support this beneficent attitude towards others without moral and intellectual contradictions and anomalies.

10

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

ALTHOUGH we hear much, today, about fundamental human rights, we hear little about fundamental human duties. Duties are logically prior to rights ; it is for the performance of fundamental duties that human beings need certain rights to be secured. Human rights as well as duties originate in the demand for self-realisation, the self to be realised being a social and rational self which cannot realise itself except in co-operation and integration with other selves. Love is the greatest of harmonising and unitive forces, hence all ethics is grounded in this urge. Apart from love, mere logic can create no morality. The philosophers who have tried to lay down ethics on purely logical grounds have failed to give it a firm foundation. Kant reduced all morality to the categorical imperative of duty but depleted duty of love ; for him an action done out of love is not a moral action. Similarly, he created a chasm between duty and happiness, both of which, according to him, are equally rational demands but they do not coincide on this plane of mundane existence. This artificial dichotomy leads him to postulate a God who should make them coincide in another realm. The other great writer on Ethics, the British philosopher Sidgwick, at the end of an elaborate analysis of morality, concludes that rationally there appears to be no ground for an individual to sacrifice his happiness for the happiness of others. The failure of thinkers like Kant and Sidgwick is due to a false view of the human self. Kant's failure is due to complete segregation of reason and feeling and Sidgwick's failure is caused by his

individualistic and atomistic view of the human selves, which did not let him bridge the gulf between egoism and altruism. In comparison with these abortive attempts to find a firm foundation for morality, the great Prophets, saints and mystics have succeeded better even from the philosophic viewpoint because they discovered that love, not logic, is the source as well as the fact of morality. Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī has propounded the view that love is a sovereign remedy for mental, moral and physical diseases ; he says it is Plato and Galen at the same time. According to Spencer, human instincts and desires, after a long process of evolution, shall be so harmonised that the conflict between egoism and altruism will disappear ; people will naturally will that which is good for the individual and is conducive to general well-being at the same time. We would add to this that a genuinely spiritual man has already reached that stage ; he feels pleasure and deep satisfaction in a virtuous act and needs no supernatural divinity to reconcile those elements which at a lower level appear to be contradictory. Love starts biologically at the relation of parents to offspring. As life advances to higher stages, it requires the extension of the same sentiment in ever-expanding concentric circles developing into a cosmic consciousness of love and harmony. Bergson reached this truth at the end of his career, recording his convictions in his book *The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*, that the creative urge of life, the *elan vital* which is apprehended, not by logical intellect, but by intuition as a love urge, is the source of the universal morality of Prophets and saints which is something quite other than the common morality of mankind, which is nothing but group morality originating in the collective egoism of groups.

Let us see if morality preached and practised by the great Prophet was of this nature. He starts with universalism in his view of existence. The universe is a unity in spite of the infinite variety of phenomena ; it is a *universe* and not a *multiverse* because its creative

ground is one Unitary Being. Existence is not governed by a multiplicity of gods at loggerheads with one another, nor is it an eternal battleground of Yazdān and Ahriman. Then follows the optimistic view about all Reality that it is sustained and nourished by a benevolent force which creates, improves and guides. The primeval unity manifests itself in

of their immemorial tribalism and uniting them into a solid fraternity is one of the miracles of history. But if Muhammad had been satisfied with consolidating the Arab nation he could have been praised only as a great national leader. But he was a Prophet and not a nationalist, because nationalism at its best is narrow and confined which nourishes an in-group and out-group psychology. In his last sermon he struck at the root of all racial nationalism by proclaiming that the Arabs as Arabs have no superiority over the non-Arabs, nor can the non-Arabs as such claim any superiority over the Arabs ; superiority or inferiority among human beings lies only in their character, all other criteria of judgment are wrong :

O ye men ! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other ; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful of his duty (xlii. 13).

Islam proceeded further to establish universal peace by proclaiming that the Messengers of God had proclaimed essential truths about God and Man to all civilised communities ; all spiritual religions were essentially true ; therefore, the spiritual leaders and founders of all communities are to be acknowledged as Prophets of God. The Muslims are exhorted to deal with all religious communities on this universal presumption. Islam was well aware of the fact that the whole of humanity shall never become one religious community with identical laws and identical modes of conduct and worship. But it is possible to bring humanity round to a belief in universal values, to actualise which communities and nations may strive in their distinctive ways. As differences of colours and tongues are not basic, so differences of modes in the implementation of universal values and variation of types of worship of One Universal Reality ought not to constitute grounds of segregation and antagonism. The Qur'an made a direct appeal to the followers of spiri-

tual religions to come together on the areas of agreement and make a common cause for the uplift of humanity :

Say : O followers of the Book ! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah (iii. 63).

The Qur'ān praised the pious followers of other creeds and thereby indicated that the followers of Muḥammad alone are not the monopolists of truth and salvation :

Of the followers of the Book there is an upright party : they recite Allah's (revealed verses) in the night time and they adore (Him). They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and they vie with one another in hastening to good deed, and these are among the good. And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it (iii. 112-114).

The Qur'ān was conscious of the fact that in general people continue to live in the faith in which they are born. Therefore, barring all except the Muslims from salvation would be unjustifiable. It would be reverting to the narrowness and group egotism which Islam wanted to destroy. The Qur'ān rebukes the Jews and the Christians for adopting this monopolistic attitude :

And the Jews say: The Christians do not follow anything (good), and the Christians say: The Jews do not follow anything (good), while they recite the (same) Book (ii. 113)

and repeats twice its liberal theistic faith that all believers in God and after-life who lead virtuous lives are saved. The Qur'ānic phrase for salvation, that they are "above fear and grief," is the Islamic connotation of beatitude :

Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good, he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for him, nor shall he grieve (ii. 112).

Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve (ii. 62).

Surely those who say: Our Lord is Allah, then continue on the right way; they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (xlvi. 13).

Inter-group peace and goodwill, both by positive appreciation of the good qualities of others and by toleration of differences, is a social necessity. The Islamic injunction is that where you cannot positively approve the beliefs and practices of others you should at least tolerate them if they are not intolerably immoral and obnoxious and if they do not directly disrupt the essential bonds of a peaceful society. Compulsion in the matters of faith was categorically prohibited and the Muslims are enjoined not to use offensive language about the objects of worship of other people:

There is no compulsion in religion (ii. 256).

And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah (vi. 109).

The Holy Prophet granted the following charter of freedom to the Jews of Banī ‘Auf:

The Jews of Banī ‘Auf and Muslims shall be considered a single nation. They shall help each other at the time of external attack. Their relations shall be determined by a spirit of goodwill to their mutual advantage. The terms of this agreement shall apply to the Allies of the Jews as well. The oppressed shall always be helped.

A similar charter was granted by Muḥammad to the Christians of Najrān:

The people of Najrān shall have the protection of God and the Prophet. Their life, their nation, their country, their wealth, their people, present and absent, and their dependants—are all under protection. There shall be no change in their present position, nor shall their privileges be reduced. Whatever is in their possession, much or less, shall be theirs.

Human fraternity cannot become real if exploitation of one class by another is not prevented and if the weak and the poor are not assisted by law and social legislation. At the time of the advent of Islam all kinds of exploitation were rampant all over the world. Higher castes not only dominated, but exploited and degraded the lower castes, the extreme of which was found in Hindu society. The masters were callous and cruel to the slaves, men deprived women of even elementary rights, monarchs and feudal lords swallowed up economic resources in luxuries built on the blood and sweat of poor working classes, and usurers sucked the blood of the needy borrowers. Islam did not rest contented with merely preaching love and goodwill but tried to stop all the avenues of exploitation. Monarchy was abolished. Muhammad, having consolidated the whole of Arabia, was not crowned as a king. He continued to live in his mud-hut, sweeping his floor, mending his shoes and milking his goats. He claimed no special privileges for himself and his family. He warned his dear daughter Fātimah that, all citizens having been made equal before law, if she committed a theft she could not escape punishment like an ordinary thief. To do away with the curse of monarchy he established a democratic republic nominating no one as his successor that would curtail the liberties of the people to choose their chief. He wanted them to choose the best man on no other basis except all-round fitness and purity of character. As a legislator Prophet, he had to legislate, but he was wise enough to know that excessive legislation hampers the growth of developing life and the infinite variety of situations can never be poured into the moulds of rigid rules. He exhorted judges to exercise their own judgment where they did not find an explicit injunction. He prohibited people from asking him unnecessary questions about permissions and prohibitions. He once rebuked such a questioner, saying: "The worst of tyrannisers over his fellow Muslims is he who puts to me an unnecessary

question, because my position is such that any answer given by me shall become binding on all Muslims ; and this questioner shall be responsible for having curtailed the liberty of action of others where God has left them free to judge for themselves."

The Prophet had said that when Islam moulds the lives of nations and States there shall be no monarchs. He set the example of a ruler wedded to poverty considering the revenues of the State as a sacred trust for the welfare of the people. His example was followed by four of his Successors. But historical evolution had not reached a stage where an extended realm could be run as a democratic republic as envisaged by Islam. Monarchy returned as an inevitable condition and Muslim monarchs, still falsely enjoying the honorific title of Khalīfah, began to outdo in luxury and pomp the Ceasars and Chosroes whom they had replaced.

The other source of exploitation was feudalism in which estates passed undivided to the eldest son according to the law of primogeniture leaving the other heirs and dependants unprovided. The Islamic law of inheritance could not have allowed feudalism to develop because the estate would be divided among all the sons in equal shares, women and daughters also having their prescribed shares. No feudal lords, and no serfs.

Slavery is the only undesirable institution which was so all-pervading in the economic life of all civilised communities that it was impossible to abolish it at a stroke. Islam did about it whatever was practicable. Slavery was a product of wars and predatory raids. About the war prisoners Islam enjoined that they may either ransom themselves or be set free as a charitable act. Emancipation of slaves was laid down as a great meritorious act spiritually. All types of cruelty to slaves was made punishable and the Prophet allowed people to keep their slaves only on condition that they fed and clothed them as they fed and clothed themselves, a condition hard to fulfil even with

respect to free servants. The Prophet set an example in never having a slave himself nor allowing his daughter Fātimah to have one, in spite of her entreaties for assistance in the very taxing domestic work of grinding corn and fetching heavy skins of water from distant springs. A part of the State revenues was enjoined to be spent on the emancipation of slaves. Slavery could not, for obvious reasons, be abolished all at once, so many measures were adopted to make it dwindle by stages. The Islamic religious code is the only code in which quite a large number of major and minor sins and crimes carry the emancipation of slaves as atonement or fine. The exhortation of showing kindness to slaves had this effect on Muslim society that slaves became respected teachers, administrators, ministers of the realm, commanders of armies and founders of dynasties. There has been a Slave Dynasty among the rulers of India and the powerful Mamluks of Egypt also originated in slavery as their name denotes. If Islam had been practised in spirit and letter, slavery, even in this humane way of treating them, should have been completely abolished. But which society ever practised Islam in its entirety and which society, Islamic or un-Islamic, does it even now? Islam envisaged a society of free human beings. The Prophet is reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgment God will turn away His face from the man who had enslaved a free man."

The other exploited class was that of poor debtors whose blood was sucked by moneylending usurious vampires. All types of usury and economic exploitation in their obvious and disguised shapes were severely tabooed and were held equivalent to waging war against Allah and His Prophet. Hoarding of cereals and essential commodities in expectation of realising high prices was made a crime.

Now we come to another oppressed class, the women. In the martial society of Arabian tribes, girls were considered to be a liability, as the birth of a daughter

saddened the parents. Infanticide of girls was common and condoned by the mores of this cruel society. The Qur'an has mentioned this cruelty with great pathos. Once a man after conversion to Islam related to the Prophet how he took his baby girl, who had just started toddling and talking, to the edge of a pit and as he pushed her into it she continued crying: "Papa, Papa". Hearing this the tender-hearted Prophet wept so bitterly and so long that his beard became wet. The Qur'an started improving man's view about women in recasting the legend of Adam and Eve and the Fall taking away all blame from Eve. Whatever the nature of the Fall, Adam and Eve were equal partners in this transgression; it was not Eve who, having been induced by Satan, misled Adam. After repentance both of them were forgiven. According to the Islamic teaching, no sin sticks to the soul after sincere repentance and no sin is passed on to the progeny; sin is a matter of individual responsibility, and repentance and good actions wipe away its bad effects. Then it is said that the sexes bifurcated from the same single being, so their essence is the same. Woman is not the instrument of the Devil as early Christian Fathers held her to be:

O people! be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) (iv. 1).

Love between the sexes is held by the Qur'an to be a blessing of God. Love of the sexes whose proper use, expansion and sublimation creates amenities of life, art, literature and culture, is a mighty manifestation of God's love and mercy. It is corroborated by modern psychology that all other loves are an overflow of this original fountain. If sex urge were a curse as held by ascetic creeds, all life and culture will become a curse, because they all are derivatives from this primeval urge which is creative of biological as well as cultural life. If this love were not there as a basic fact of existence, who could have believed that this attribute belongs

essentially to the Creator of all life? Human beings can believe in a loving Creator only because they feel the reality of this great manifestation. The following verses points to this great truth:

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion ; and most surely there are signs in this for a people who repent (xxx. 21).

Carlyle, in his essay on Muhammad ["Hero As Prophet"], refers to this verse as one of the great truths revealed to Muham

life a hell for one or both parties, ruining the life of children as well. Islam made marriage a civil contract in which any legitimate conditions, acceptable to both parties and not contrary to morality, could be inserted and made legally binding. The Qur'an gives a very rational procedure to ward off the breaking of marriage. The parties are advised to make all efforts at mutual accommodation. If they fail in this, a reconciliation attempt is to be made by friends and relatives of both parties. When even that does not succeed and the husband is bent on divorcing his wife, he is allowed to do so without bringing a charge against the wife and without washing dirty linen in a court of law or in public. If the woman demands divorce, being comparatively weak and helpless, she is asked to seek assistance of the court which will grant her request if the fault lies with the husband. If without accusing the husband she finds life with him not agreeable she can seek divorce, but under such circumstances she has to give back to the husband whatever she had received from him. The Prophet was so liberal, humane and rational in the matter of marriage and divorce that he allowed dissolution of marriage at the request of a woman of the name of Jamilah when she approached him saying frankly that she had nothing against the husband except natural aversion which robbed her marital life of joy. On this ground of extreme incompatibilities she was allowed divorce. Some modern liberals in the West have been struggling for a long time to make the laws of marriage and divorce rational and the extent to which they have succeeded brings the Western legal system nearer to the Islamic code. They have succeeded in getting the right of inheritance for women and have also succeeded in making marriage a civil contract dissoluble under certain conditions, though most of the Churches do not recognise it. In Great Britain, women succeeded after a long struggle to retain their property after marriage, changing the cruel law which made a woman pauper at the altar,

the marriage ceremony having vested all her assets in the husband. The basis of this unjust law was the assumption that the husband and the wife become one person but in practice that one person happened to be the husband. This is a sufficient evidence of how Islam was far ahead of the times in granting complete independence to women. Contrary to the British law above mentioned, in Islam marriage could not be consummated without the husband vesting a part of his property in the wife. If he did not possess the required amount at the time of the wedlock a solemn promise of payment, if agreed to by the bride, could be made a term of the marriage contract. This debt became a first charge on the property of the husband during his life and after his death. All the creditors and claimant heirs had to keep back till this debt is discharged, although it may happen that after the fulfilment of this obligation the others may have to go empty-handed. Has any old or modern code ever equalled or surpassed this champion-ship of the economic independence of women?

The Qur'anic law laid down the firm foundation of women's rights by the categorical announcement that "women have rights over men as men have rights over women, though man stands one step higher" (ii. 228).

Women in the West having gradually emerged from the status of utter rightlessness are swinging now to the other extreme of demanding absolute equality of the sexes in all spheres of life, forgetting physiological and psychological differences and disregarding the dictum that rights could only be commensurate with duties. Let us see how Islam has dealt with this problem. We have quoted above the verses indicating that men and women have a common origin and in various cultural spheres they are mutual helpers "protective and decorative coverings of each other. But they are not made completely equal in every respect by Nature. Basic morality is the same for both and neither in the religious nor in the moral sphere does Islam tolerate any double standards. Given

equal opportunities a woman can prove as intellectual as a man. But who can deny that she is constitutionally made for motherhood? Nietzsche said rightly that a woman is essentially a woman and her physiology and psychology revolve round this pivotal fact. This constitutes the glory of womanhood which makes women assimilate to some extent the attribute of the Absolute Creator. But her physiology and responsibilities of motherhood compel her to keep away from hazardous and strenuous physical effort. While she is confined to the life of motherhood man remains free for a thousand occupations. Because of his physical strength and freedom from physiological handicaps he becomes a bread-earner and protector and defender of wife and children against threatening forces. These multifarious responsibilities are thrown on the shoulders of men. The Qur'an has said about men that they do not enjoy overall superiority over women but are only one step higher on account of the difference that makes them the protectors of women and lays upon them the duty of maintaining them. In making men physically stronger God has granted men an extra gift which is burdened with responsibilities:

Men are the maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they spend out of their property (iv. 34).

How this natural difference leads to some difference in rights can be understood with reference to the Islamic law of inheritance which gives two shares to the brother against one share to the sister. Some Western critics, even those whose own codes, till recently, gave no share in inheritance to daughters, unjustly point to this to prove that Islam considers woman only to be half of man. They ignore the fact that whatever a woman receives she keeps. She has no duty of maintaining even her own children out of her means. On the other hand, man has to support her and the family and enter into business transactions which

require capital. With her half share remaining intact in her possession, a woman becomes richer than her brother. Giving man and woman equal shares would have been unjust to man who is burdened with manifold responsibilities. Among the Muslim nations, the modern Turks, trying to prove themselves go-ahead secularist liberals, equalised the inheritance shares of the brother and the sister, deceiving themselves that it is a step towards greater justice, although it is clear injustice to the male on whose shoulders the burden of maintenance lies. When he marries, even to start with, he has to part with a portion of his assets and enrich the woman while she keeps all that she receives. Have the Turks really improved on the Islamic code? Because women have a "lesser burden of financial responsibilities," some countries do not pay them the same wages that they pay to men for similar work. When Churchill was Prime Minister of England, he threatened to resign if a law was passed to give equal pay for similar work to men and women. But so far as one's earnings are concerned, Islam would not sanction differential wage for similar work because wage is a recompense for labour; if there is no difference in work, why should there be any difference in wages? For this there is a definite Qur'ānic injunction:

Men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn (iv. 32).

We have already dealt with the question of polygamy which in Western eyes is a proof of the downgrading of women in Muslim society. We shall not go over it again. Islam did not recommend polygamy in normal conditions but restricted it and regulated it when circumstances permit this practice. The condition of strict justice laid down is such that, instead of sensual indulgence, it entails heavy familial responsibilities. If practised in exceptional cases according to conditions laid down by Islam it can save society from the curse and misery and sin of fornication, mistress-

keeping, *demi-mondes*, prostitutes, unmarried mothers and a host of illegitimate children undeservedly cast out or suffering from stigma as we find in Western countries. As Bernard Shaw has said, under many circumstances, it would be better for a woman to have half a husband than to have no husband at all. In this respect Muslim society in general is cleaner than other societies. The general mass of Muslims are not to be judged on the analogy of the harems of the Sultans, but in many respects the present Muslim law made by some jurists, commentators and epigones has deviated much from original Islam. The liberty of man to divorce is misused and the liberty of woman to get divorced is curtailed. In urban society the system of seclusion of women, meant in moderation to protect chastity and family life, has gone to irrational extremes, which incapacitates women from realising their personalities fully. The women of workers and peasants are much free because they cannot afford this bourgeois seclusion which has become a sign of respectability and higher status. But educated Western women are fast coming up demanding the rights granted to them by God and His Prophet. In many countries they are now members of legislatures, ministers and judges. It is hoped that enjoying legitimate Islamic liberties they will not go to the extremes in trying to imitate men in all respects, and lose their essential virtues in a demand for a wrong kind of equality which will injure them more than benefit them. Liberty has its uses as well as risks. Islam has defined their rights and duties with rationality and liberality. Un-Islamic customs, bad laws and masculine domination had deprived them of much of their fundamental rights. Development of democracy and increase of education will enable them to regain the honourable status that Islam gave them. Let them be creators of good and happy families and not sacrifice their essential and natural function to clamour for careers, none of which can equal in value the noble task entrusted to them. It lies.

in them to make life a paradise, for did not the Prophet say: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother"?

It was one of the great achievements of Islam to convert a society, which practised female infanticide and deplored the birth of a girl as a calamity, into believing in the value and dignity of womanhood, granting them rights of inheritance and economic independence and inculcating equal treatment for sons and daughters. Bringing up daughters with love was promised by the Prophet as a guarantee of entering into the bliss of Paradise in the Hereafter; kind and loving treatment of girls shall screen people from the fire of Hell. He said: "Whoever brings up two girls with loving kindness till they attain to youth shall stand shoulder to shoulder with me and shall be in the same rank." Illustrating this he lifted up two joined fingers as a symbol of proximity. He pointed to this as the greatest act of spiritual merit transcending all the rest of morality. The transformation of attitude towards girls developed to this extent that people contested to get the guardianship of ophan girls and the Prophet had to settle their claims and hand over the girls to those who could bring them up with greater love and care. 'Ali and his brother Ja'far and Zaid each put forth arguments to take the orphan daughter of the martyred Hamzah. The Prophet was pleased to see how they were competing with one another and decided to entrust the girl to her aunt, saying that the aunt is like a second mother.

With the teaching of Islam, a girl along with the boy became *Qurrat al-'Ain* (the "pleasant coolness of the eye"), the Arabic idiom for a supremely blissful feeling. The pious ones are made to pray for such a blessing:

And they who say: O our Lord! grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes (xxv. 74).

The beduins were astonished to see this new attitude towards girls. A beduin poet explained sarcasti-

cally: "What an abundance of girls now after the prophethood of Muḥammad!" When boys get preferential treatment in the family, the sisters cherish a conscious or subconscious feeling of resentment and frustration and come to develop inferiority complex leading later on to what is called masculine protest. The people should guard against this and not show any preference to boys over girls. In *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, the Prophet is reported to have said: "Whoever has a daughter and keeps her alive without any indignity and prefers not a boy to her in treatment, shall enter Paradise." How apprehensive was the Prophet about the bad consequences of invidious treatment of children in the same family is evidenced by another act of his. A father made a gift to one of his sons and came to the Prophet to attest it. He asked the man if he had made similar gifts to other children. When the man answered in the negative, the Prophet said: "I shall not be a witness to an unjust act" (*Abū Dāwūd*, "Kitāb al-Buyū'").

THE ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM
UNDER SPECIFIC HEADINGS

Truthfulness. Truthfulness is basic for all morality. This is well put by Shakespeare in his utterance: "To thine own self be true and it shall follow as the night the day that thou canst not be false to anyone else." There is a truth of words and a truth of action and a truth of attitude. It is not enough for a person that he says what is true; he should also act on what he believes to be true, and his attitude should be in conformity with what he considers to be true. How truthfulness could be the foundation of other virtues and a sure means of keeping away from evil is illustrated in a well-known *hadīth* of the Prophet. It is reported in the early biographies that a man came to the Prophet and confessed that he was addicted to fornication, theft, drunkenness and telling lies. He came, he said, with a sincere desire to be reformed and wanted advice as to how to go about it. It is not clear from the report whether the man was a Muslim or he had not yet accepted Islam and had come to the Prophet believing him to be a good and practical mentor. The probable guess is that he was not a Muslim, because a convert to Islam could not have committed all this or, having committed any of these acts, could not have remained unpunished. The other reason for believing him not to be a Muslim is that he promised to give up only one of these sinful habits whatever the Prophet chose to select as most heinous. The Prophet said: "Leave off telling lies." The sinner promised to abide by it scrupulously. During the following night he was tempted to drink and

fornicate, but it occurred to him that "if Muhammad asks me about my doings I shall have to tell the truth, but could I dare to tell him of my sin and face him without shame?" This thought made him refrain from what he was about to commit. Similarly, when he was tempted to commit theft in the darkness of the night, the impossibility of confessing it before the Prophet made him desist. The next morning he went to the Prophet to tell him that the avoidance of untruthfulness has cured him of all his sins.

Before the Prophetic Call it was his trustworthiness and truthfulness which had earned for Muhammad the title of *al-Amin*. It was this trait of his own character to which he pointed in his first announcement to the people of his clan of the warning that he had received from God about the fate of idolatrous pagans if they continued in their false faith and deleterious practices. So that when he asked them if they had ever found him telling a lie, they bore unanimous witness to his truthfulness. Then he told them what was revealed to him that the believers in this message would be rewarded with material and spiritual well-being in this world and in the Hereafter and those who opposed this truth would be destroyed. How true was this prophecy uttered by a single individual without power and pelf of any kind is proved by his success on a global scale. This was because he was true to himself and to others. It was the strength of his sincerity that made him the most successful of all the reformers of mankind. It was the sincerity of his faith in himself and in his God that moved away mountains of opposition. A truthful man could not be a hypocrite, he would fulfil his promises and not violate a trust, he could not be flattered and would be endowed with moral and physical courage.

The most truthful of all human beings are the divinely-commissioned Prophets of God whose chief virtue is their sincerity and truthfulness. If they were either impostors or self-deluded men, their efforts would have ended in smoke. Monarchs and conquerors who wielded

tremendous power during their time are remembered only vaguely in the pages of history having left no lasting impress on the hearts and souls of humanity because the edifice of their power was built on the sands of self-love and lust for power. They embodied no eternal truths, so time effaced their glory and achievement. Over against them men like Jesus and Muhammad continue to mould the lives of countless millions urging them to be true to themselves and to others and to the eternal verities of life. Their God was the God of truth and they were the messengers and embodiments of that truth. The Qur'an has repeatedly referred to this characteristic of the Prophets :

And Allah and His Apostle spoke the truth (xxxiii. 22).

And the Apostles told the truth (xxxvi. 52).

And mention Abraham in the Book : surely he was a truthful man, a prophet (xix. 41).

Joseph ! O truthful one ! (xii. 46).

It is the truthfulness of people that makes them deserving of God's forgiveness and a great reward in the Hereafter ; only their truthfulness shall benefit them on the Day of Reckoning :

The truthful men and the truthful women. . . . Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward (xxxiii. 35).

This is a day when their truths shall benefit the truthful ones (v. 119).

O you who believe ! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and be with the true ones (ix. 119).

The Prophet considered truthfulness to be so essential a trait of a believing man that, on being asked about the possibility of a Muslim being a coward in physical courage or being a miser, he replied that it was possible even for a Muslim to suffer from these undesirable traits but it was not possible to be a Muslim and a liar at the same time. Hypocrisy is also opposite to truthfulness, and the Qur'an considers the hypocrite as worse than the infidel because an infidel may be excused for his wrong beliefs having been a

victim of his bad social inheritance but hypocrisy is an individually acquired trait. The Qur'ān says about the hypocrites that they shall be in the lowest abyss of the Hell (iv. 145).

There are numerous sayings of the Prophet inculcating truthfulness as an essential part of faith and condemning hypocrisy as worse than infidelity. We summarise them below.

No man's faith is complete if he does not discard untruth even in a joke and does not refrain from it in a dispute, though his cause may be just. A hypocrite is one who tells lies, violates trust, does not fulfil promises and utters untruth in a dispute, as a report in *Sahīh Muslim* adds, "even though he prays and fasts with regularity and professes to be a Muslim." Scrupulous observing of institutional religion is of no avail to a person who lacks truthfulness because these observances are meant mainly to strengthen this essential trait ; they are the means and not ends in themselves. Speaking truth habitually is the way of virtue that makes a person righteous and leads him to Paradise and the opposite habit leads him to Hell" (al-Bukhārī, "Kitāb al-Adab").

We have already quoted the *hadīth* about the untruthfulness of motives. A man spends his life gathering religious knowledge and imparting it without intrinsic love for knowledge, urged only by vanity and love of praise ; another gives away large sums even for good purposes without being charitable in heart, doing it only to acquire fame and social prestige ; another shows bravery in a holy war, not urged by the holiness of the cause but motivated by the desire to be called brave. None of these are truthful because they are deceiving themselves and others. For spiritual well-being the essential thing is righteousness and sincerity of motives ; in the realm of the spirit people are not judged by the criterion of utilitarian ethics. Philosophically, truth means correspondence with reality. To judge a thing or an event in a manner that the judg-

ment reflects the real relation between parts stamps that judgment with truth. But there is also a pragmatic test of truth. If you are convinced about a truth, then your action will necessarily correspond with it. The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet constantly refer to this pragmatic test. Faith, if genuine, must show itself in actions that issue from it as necessary corollaries, otherwise it remains at the level of mere speculation or a plausible hypothesis or remains at the superficial level of verbal admission. Therefore, the Qur'an has said in clear words that speculative faith is of no avail (x. 36), and in numerous places it makes it a point to mention faith only in conjunction with good deeds as completing sincere and truthful living. It is doubt which paralyses action and makes a person weigh pros and cons endlessly without coming to a decision that could result in action. People of weak faith are those who are still subconsciously pestered with doubts; it is only firm convictions that become ruling passions colouring a person's total outlook and conduct, and issue into the integration of life's various and conflicting aspects, making self-control and sacrifice natural without inner strains and stresses. A patriot who believes wholeheartedly in the truth of his nation's cause does not hesitate to make a supreme sacrifice; he never counts the cost, because for him the objective is more valuable than everything that is sacrificed. This characteristic of sincerity is mentioned in a number of verses in the Qur'an:

The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Apostle; then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; they are the truthful ones (xlii. 15).

In Sūrah Baqarah the test of truthfulness and sincere faith is defined in detail:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and

the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor rate ; and the fulfilment of their promise, when they make a promise and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict—these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard themselves (against evil) (ii. 177).

The truthful man is one whose words correspond with his deeds. In the terminology of the *Hadīth*, a person who is endowed with unwavering faith and his cognition, feeling and volition are completely integrated according to it, resulting in a complete correspondence of thought, word and deed, is called *Siddīq* and such a person is the ideal man of Islam.

Charity. The concept of charity is so comprehensive that it covers almost the whole of morality. This comprehensive connotation is found in Christian as well as Islamic ethics. Greek ethics inculcated four cardinal virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Temperance and Justice. The Christian Trinity of virtues is Faith, Hope and Charity. In Islam virtue branches off in many more directions but a good many of them could be covered by a wide meaning of Charity. The first mention of charity in the second Sūrah (Cow) of the Qur’ān defines it completely in three words: “and spend out of what We have given them” (ii. 3). It is given as one of the essential characteristics of virtuous men of faith that they spend on others that need it out of that with which they have been gifted. Whatever a person possesses in abundance is ultimately a gift of God and if a person does not believe in God, one could tell him it is a gift of Nature. If he is born with a good constitution and possesses abundant stores of health and endurance, it is not his own creation ; he may feel happy about it but it would be foolish if he takes pride in it as a personal achievement. If his health is maintained by good food and climate, food and climate are not his creation. If he is more intelligent than

others with a greater capacity of acquiring knowledge he did not create his own superior intelligence quotient. Wealth comes out of natural resources or out of the cumulative labour of workers organised or exploited for the increase and accumulation of capital. An uncharitable miser thinks that it is his right to hold and withhold what he accumulates because he considers that he is the sole creator and originator of the wealth. The Qur'an points to the falsity of this conceited claim and, in asking people to be charitable, it says that they are being asked to give away a part of that which in the ultimate analysis is not their creation but is a gift of God and His nature. Who would be rich if Nature had not provided all the means? To a person who possesses an abundance of the goods of life God has been charitable and it is the charitable God, the free giver of gifts, Who is demanding only a part of it back to help those who have been gifted with less or have suffered some deprivation or calamity. In the three words quoted above there is a convincing argument and persuasive appeal for charity. You are asked to give away a portion of that which is not wholly your own. Miserly withholding could be tantamount to usurpation or embezzlement. A shadow of this conception is found in the exaggerated revolutionary slogan of Prodhoun, the socialist, that "Property is theft." All the Prophets and saints were socialists in this respect as the Prophet Muhammad is reported by his successor Abū Bakr to have said that the Prophets have only the use of things and they do not own anything: "We Prophets neither inherit anything nor do we leave anything to others as inheritance."

Jesus was of the same view; therefore he laid it down as a condition precedent of co-operating with the man of property if he first disburses himself of his material possessions. Humanity is conceived spiritually as one organic whole; the organ that accumulates selfishly and withholds the life-blood that is meant to circulate to feed the remotest cells in the body, gets

diseased itself besides injuring the rest of the organism. The conception of unhampered circulation of the means of life through the entire social organism is given in the Qur'an in the succinct but pregnant injunctions that you should arrange for economic distribution of means in such a manner that wealth does not circulate only in the hand of a rich minority (lx. 7).

Whatever man thinks that it belongs to him is given to him as a trust to be spent for the welfare of the whole which includes himself to the extent that he really needs it for his physical, mental and moral well-being.

The Qur'an expresses astonishment at the foolish and unjust attitude of man who does not give something back in the way of the Lord, the Creator and real owner of all that the heaven and earth contain:

And what reason have you that you should not spend in Allah's way? And Allah's is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth (lvii. 10).

Again in Sūrah Al-i-'Imrān it is repeated emphatically that the hoarder who is withholding the gifts of God from healthy circulation is mistaken in thinking that this unjust hoarding would benefit him. The Qur'an says that superfluous wealth confers no real benefit and acts only as a halter round the neck of the miser who is burdened with its care and constantly apprehensive about its possible loss; such a man's spirit is cramped.

And let not those deem who are niggardly in giving away that which Allah has granted them out of His grace, that it is good for them; they shall have that whereof they were niggardly made to cleave to their necks on the Resurrection Day, and Allah's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth (iii. 179).

The punishment of an uncharitable miser is not extraneous to his crime; he is already in Hell. It was said by the Prophet that there is a notice on the gates of Paradise that there is no admittance here for the miser.

That natural and socially created wealth should be legitimately shared by all members, is evident from another injunction in the Qur'ān, that those deprived of some benefits of which you have an abundance have a "right" to share in them (li. 19). The rich man who is giving something to a poor man must not think that he is putting the receiver under an obligation. The Qur'ān says that the needy man who has received something had a right to it as a constituent member of the social organism. The socialist States in the twentieth century which consider it the right of every citizen to have his fundamental needs fulfilled and make it a duty of the State to fulfil them are implementing this injunction and concede it as a right of every citizen.

The Qur'ān points to a common human weakness that if a man suffers some loss or is afflicted with some calamity he attributes it to causes external to himself; if he believes in God he cries aloud and complains to God, but if he receives benefits or earns and accumulates a lot of wealth he himself takes the entire credit for it, as if neither God nor man had any hand in making him rich and prosperous. The callous capitalists and rich landlords always put forth this plea when they are told that the have-nots have a right to some share in their property. They say that what they possess is a product of their efficiency and skill; why should the State invade any wealth? Dean Inge, who deplored the decline of landed aristocracy, complained that socialistic democracy advancing steadily in Britain means the robbing of the rich minority, the custodian of British culture, by the predatory majority of low mental and moral calibre. The Qur'ān says that the hoarders of capital have throughout history felt and thought like that, but this attitude has been ultimately their ruin:

So when harm afflicts a man he calls upon Us; then, when We give him a favour from Us, he says: I have been given it only by means of knowledge. Say: It is a trial, but most of them

do not know. Those before them did say it indeed, but what they earned availed them not (xxxix. 49-50).

Islam is a creed of the middle path and the Muslim community is called in the Qur'an the nation that observes the golden mean between two extremes. About charity the Qur'an answers a question put to the Prophet as to how much one should give away in charity:

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say : What you can spare (ii. 219).

And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off (xvii. 29).

A Muslim is enjoined to be generous and charitable but not to the extent that he makes himself a pauper thereby. The capacity to give is proportionate to the capacity to earn. A man has a duty towards himself and his family which is prior to his duty to the general social body. As Islam abolished priesthood of the begging bowl and did not want ascetics with no useful professions and no families, it wanted society to consist of healthy units of honest wage-earners who keep themselves and their families free from want and penury. The Prophet said that penury is to be dreaded and avoided as much as superfluous hoarded wealth. Voluntary simple living is recommended which is healthy both for mind and body, but poverty meaning deprivation of the essentials of life is to be shunned and avoided because it tends to paralyse human faculties, and makes it extremely difficult for a person to maintain his self-respect ; an indigent person's faith and morality too are endangered.

The Prophet urges people to be charitable and not to drive away the needy person who asks for assistance. But an advice complementary to this was to make all efforts to avoid asking for charity. The ideal in his mind was a Welfare State which looks after the essential needs of all individuals by levying a tax on capital

to be spent to relieve all kinds of misery, a kind of levelling tax, taken from people's surpluses and spent on the uplift of the poor. "Take (money) from the rich and spend it on the poor." But he wished for a condition when *Zakāt* money shall be there to be spent on the needy but there will be no one prepared to take it, either because people's essential needs are satisfied or because they have become so self-respecting that they would not accept charity. How averse he was for any self-respecting individual to accept any charity can be gathered from his orders that no member of his family should accept anything given in charity. The family lived on the verge of starvation, seldom getting two square meals a day, but he would not allow a child of his family to put a morsel in his mouth out of food offered in charity. His grandson Hasan once put a date in his mouth out of a basket offered in charity, but the Prophet made him throw it out. He taught people to avoid begging, and make an effort to earn something by their labour. Once a man came to him begging. The Prophet asked him if he was reduced to such utter penury that he possessed nothing and was compelled to beg. The man replied that he possessed only a wooden bowl. He was asked to bring it. The Prophet himself auctioned it for a few coins and therewith bought the blade of an axe and fixed a handle to it, himself, asking the man to cut fuel in the bushes and sell it in the town to buy bread. He was asked to come back after some days and report about his condition. The man returned after a few days and said that he had no need to beg now and made a moderate living by selling fuel (Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, narrated by Anas).

About giving in charity, the Qur'ānic revelation uses an interesting and meaningful expression "goodly gift" (*Qard-i-Hasanah*) which may be rendered into English as "debt of honour". God is the owner of whatever creation holds and as an eternally creative being. He can bring into existence whatever He wants for His

purposes and for the well-being of His creatures. Does it not sound funny that He should ask his creatures to lend Him money or goods. The Qur'an has removed this anamoly by clarifying the purpose of this borrowing and lending. If you lend Him something it is for your own good, for whatever God receives from you is multiplied manifold ; this bargain is meant to convince the lender that the creative force of life multiplies whatever sustains life in its various beneficial aspects.

Surely (as for) the charitable men and the charitable women and (those who) set apart for Allah a goodly portion, it shall be doubled for them and they shall have a noble reward (lvii. 18).

Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly gift, so He will multiply it to him manifold (ii. 245).

As about so much else in its teaching, the Qur'an points to the phenomena of physical nature in evidence of fundamental truths. It asks man to look at the vegetable kingdom. You sow a seed and this single grain begins to shoot up and multiply in several ears of corn, each ear containing a hundred grains. If this law governs biological nature which is a lower manifestation of the Infinite Creative Urge, shall it not hold good in the moral and spiritual realms which stand at a higher level in the gradation of being? Do we not see in human life and history that good is potentially and actually creative and evil harbours within itself the germs of its own destruction? If lending a seed to the earth brings such a manifold return, will lending to God be a sheer loss or remain unproductive? Lending to God is not a mysterious demand ; there is nothing occult about it. God stands for general well-being. A society of charitable people is bound to prosper, and where wealth is concentrated in the hands of close-fisted niggardly hoarders, the rest of the social organism shall be starved and hoarded wealth shall do no real good to the owners themselves warping their mental and moral outlook. How life seeks to preserve goodness and multiply it is given with analogical reasoning in

the verses that follow. The second verse visualises two types of conditions: conditions favourable for the growth of goodness and conditions relatively unfavourable, and concludes that even with a very small assistance from the environment the good is bound to result in some growth as some plants not getting sufficient water from rain or irrigation maintain their growth to some extent by the moisture supplied by dew. The verse also brings out another truth that charity, besides pleasing God Who is the Sustainer of all life, strengthens our own souls; it is in the nature of magnanimity that it magnifies the spirit of the generous man; psychically he feels richer and stronger by giving. "Pleasure of Allah" (ii. 207, 265; iv. 114) and "For the certainty of their souls" (ii. 265) are two aspects of the same reality and the Qur'an has put them together:

The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-Giving, Knowing (ii. 261).

And the parable of those who spend their property to seek the pleasure of Allah and for the certainty of their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls, so it brings forth its fruit twofold (ii. 265).

As love of money is the root of many evils, so charitableness makes so many other virtues easy to be practised. The root of all moral evil is self-centredness which cannot go together with generosity and altruism. The following verse points to this truth:

Then as for him who gives away and guards (against evil), and accepts the best, We will facilitate for him the easy end (xcii. 5-7).

The Qur'an has also mentioned many things that vitiate charity. If we give away in charity things that we consider of no use to us and for which we don't have any liking, these may do some good to a needy person, but this kind of giving shall not morally benefit the giver:

"You shall attain no righteousness unless you give away that which you yourselves love (iii. 91).

Do not try to part with a bad portion of your produce in charity what you would not accept yourself if it is given to you.

O you who believe ! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, which you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

The Devil threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance. . . .

If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you; and this will do away with some of your evil deeds. . . .

Whatever good things you spend, it is to your own good; and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure; and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged (ii. 267-268, 271-272).

Nor is that charity of any spiritual value in which you make the receiver feel under any debt of obligation to you, and insult him by reminding him of what kindness you did to him. Such attitudes vitiate your charity absolutely.

A person's attitude towards money determines his entire moral outlook. There is a touchstone for gold, but gold itself is a touchstone for the moral worth of man. We have already stated that the Prophet owned nothing and could not allow any money to remain with him for more than a day or two ; he felt disturbed until it was given away. Even on his deathbed he felt uneasy about it. He asked his wife 'Ā'ishah if there was any money in his chamber and she informed him that there were a few gold coins remaining indispensed. He said : "Give them away, I don't want to meet my Lord as a hoarder." In *Bukhārī*, "Kitāb-ur-Raqāq," it is reported about the Prophet that he said to his saintly friend Abū Dharr : "If I come into possession of a

mountain of gold, I would not like one coin's worth to be left with me for more than three days except to discharge a debt ; I will scatter the whole of it with both hands, right and left, to give it to the creatures of God." "Envy only two persons : him who is granted wealth and he spends it in the right manner, and him who is granted knowledge and he imparts it to others." Charity does not lie only in giving away money or goods. "Spending out of whatever you have been gifted with" (ii. 3) covers all fields of life.

The Qur'ān does not conceive of salvation in terms of "being saved". This conception originated in religions which believe in the very birth of an individual as a curse, a calamity from which he has to be saved somehow. The alternative conception in the Qur'ān is the ideal of the attainment of well-being. The Mu'adhdhin calling the Muslims for prayers cries aloud from the minaret, "Hayya 'ala'l-Falāh" (Come to attain well-being), and for persons who have attained it the Qur'ānic phrase is "no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (ii. 38). The Qur'ān has pointed to various avenues that lead to well-being. Deluded people accumulate wealth in the belief that their well-being shall be proportionate to the amount of hoarded wealth. They, in the words of the Qur'ān, are following a mirage that would increase their thirst instead of slaking it. We might use another analogy : they are like the shipwrecked drinkers of sea-water saturated with salt, drinking of which only increases their thirst. We quote here two verses from the Qur'ān which point to two ways of attaining well-being. One is the increasing of wisdom which is an intrinsic value and not merely an instrumental value like money :

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good (ii. 269).

The other is the avoidance of greed and self-centredness that obstruct all avenues of virtue and well-being. To put the two together the man who has attained wisdom

and is charitable has attained well-being. Believing that all real values are conserved and their conservation guaranteed by the Creator of all life and its values, he attains well-being and is beyond all fear and grief:

Whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful (lxiv. 16).

Moderation. We had occasion to point to this essential characteristic of Islamic outlook and ethics in discussing other problems. This trait is so central in the Islamic teachings that the Qur'ān has called the people who follow this creed the "community of the Middle". The entire creed is based on the avoidance of extremes in belief as well as in conduct. Temperance, one of the four cardinal virtues in the Socratic-Platonic ethics, is covered by the Islamic conception of *i'tidāl*. Let us start from beliefs. Islamic theism stands between the two extremes of atheism and pantheism. The former denies the existence of God and the latter equates all existence with God. Islam says that all existence is God's creation. He is immanent in it by His power, wisdom and will, but He also transcends it, which may be understood by the analogy of the artist and his art products. The artist is more than all that he has produced, though he is immanent in every one of his products. In the words of the Qur'ān: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth," but the Light is more than the heavens and the earth, or, to borrow a line from Wordsworth: "He is a Light that never was on sea or land." Coming now to man. The Islamic conception is that he is one of God's supreme creations, and on this planet he stands supreme, a ruler of the earth with powers delegated by God. He is neither purely a spirit nor is he a mere product of matter. Physically he is a son of the soil, but spiritually he is a participant in the Divine Spirit. He has the best of constitution, but he is endowed with the risky gift of free will, not found in the creation below him. His birth is not a curse but a magnificent gift. He is capable of improv-

ing his life by wisdom and rightly-directed will, but he can also go astray and sink lower than the lowest. But he is not completely free, nor is he absolutely determined ; he is part of a whole and is subject to extra-personal compulsions of various kinds. Besides, by granting him a measure of free will God has not abdicated but continues to govern and direct. Human life is an inexplicable meeting-ground of Divine and creational determinism on the one hand, and a limited sphere of choice on the other. Man is a body and a spirit at the same time, and he is bound to satisfy his physical as well as spiritual needs, keeping them in equilibrium. He is a social being and can develop and fulfil his destiny only as a member of a society, hence asceticism and flight from individual and social responsibilities cramp and paralyse his physical as well as spiritual nature. A family man who is a worker fulfilling the duties of his vocation and station stands higher than the man who isolates himself and mortifies his flesh with a view to saving his soul. According to Islam, religious life is nothing over and above, and separate from, his mundane life ; religious life is this very life lived with a spiritual attitude that exalts the meanest of tasks. Man cannot become God nor can God become man ; the purpose of human life is to attune one's will with the will of the Infinite Creative Reality ; it is a kind of surrender which is not passive but dynamic and creative, making possible the progressive assimilation of the infinite attributes of God, which makes a finite being participant in the infinite. According to Islam, much of the corruption and falsehood in creeds is the result of exaggeration ; therefore, the Muslims are asked to avoid exaggeration and extremes. People began to venerate their holy teachers and exemplars to the extent that they made them God incarnates ; or they exaggerated the life of the spirit to the neglect of the physical and social basis of life and acquired spirituality with self-mortification or attempt at the negation of all life. Islam taught that man is meant and

destined to benefit from all that creation contains and his knowledge can make all the powers of Nature and even the angels obey him. But he must not equate him with God or think that he can dispense with Him. In another sphere of moderation Islam taught its followers to create a balance and synthesis between Law and Love :

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) (xvi. 90).

Justice is to be observed in the sphere of law, but attempt is to be made to soften the rigour wherever practicable by love and forgiveness. In the sphere of belief, unnecessary manufacture of dogmas is to be avoided. Islam, therefore, is the least dogmatic of all religions. It really has no dogmas unless you call belief in God and the Divine mission of prophethood a dogma, or belief in the survival of the human ego a dogma. Islam defined the essentials of religion and belief in a creating and sustaining Providence and drew as corollaries from this basic belief the validity and survival of values both here and in the Hereafter. The human ego being the locus of values, values cannot survive without their point of emergence and reference. These beliefs have been philosophically established by many thinkers who started without any dogmatic presumptions.

In the hotly debated problem of individualism and socialism, Islam has adopted the middle course. Islam is neither totalitarian nor would it let society on absolute *laissez-faire*. It would not curb the freedom of the individual in the matter of belief and practice, inculcating and enforcing only essential limitations in the interest of law and order. Islam abolished priesthood as a separate and privileged institution with a pyramidal hierarchy culminating in a divinely-appointed Pontiff ; in this manner it blocked the way of theocratic totalitarianism. It believed in no intermediaries between the individual and his Creator. It established

the priesthood of all believers, abolishing all sacraments for which a church or a priest would be necessary. In this respect it was several centuries ahead of Christian Protestantism ; as a matter of fact the protest of Islam against the dogmatism and churchianity, into which the faith of Jesus had drifted, makes Islam an anticipation of Reformation in the West. The teachings of Islam as well as the practice of the Prophet and his immediate Successors clearly envisaged a Welfare State, and a type of socialism without regimentation in the beliefs and practices of individuals. The freedom of belief and worship was guaranteed and the way of life of individuals and groups was left untouched by the State. It was a novel phenomenon that an ideological State should harbour within its borders an infinite variety of cultural pluralism. If socialism means the non-recognition of class and caste privileges and making equality of opportunity and equality before law the basis of State and society, then who can deny that Islam was a democratic socialist movement ? The State in Islam is no supra-personal mystical entity as it was conceived from Hegel to Hitler, but an institution to guard the legitimate freedom of the individuals. The intrinsic value lies in the individual ; the State possesses only an instrumental value. Has the world as yet proposed a better pattern of State and society combining the freedom of the individual with the basic necessities of social cohesion ? Because of the vicissitudes of history Muslim polity could not continue for long as a democratic republic and counter-revolutionary forces threw it back towards pre-Islamic political patterns, but Muslim society continued to guard its social democracy to the extent that no other society has succeeded. The Muslims have much to learn from some other nations that have developed institutions of representative government. The other nations have gradually implemented a good deal of what Islam had taught the Muslims. The government by consultation is inculcated in the Qur'an and it is

given as a characteristic of good Muslims that they arrive at decisions after mutual consultation. The emergence of absolute monarchies, which Islam had categorically repudiated, hampered the growth of representative government. Anyhow, we need not go into it any further. We are dealing only with the general principles of Islam to show in what ideal and practical way it proposes to lay the foundations of a classless society keeping all professions and careers open to all irrespective of creed or caste or race. It was on account of this liberalism that Jews and Christians co-operated with the Muslims in creating a great civilisation from Cordova to Baghdad, and the Jews continued to seek asylum in Muslim countries whenever they were driven out by Christian persecution. It was this ideology that kept Spain and Eastern Europe free in the practice of its faith after long centuries of Muslim political power. The larger portion of the Indian sub-continent continued to follow its myriad creeds and manifold ways of life even after about a millennium of Muslim rule. If Islam had practised religious intolerance and coercion and used pressures that were common in the ancient and medieval world, all Spain, all Eastern Europe, all India would have been solidly Muslim today. Islam would have gained politically but at the great price of sacrificing the principle of universal liberty for all, which is an essential part of the revolution that Islam wanted to bring about. It is said by those ill-informed about historical realities that Eastern and Western Europe was saved from Islam, but an honest verdict would be that it was saved by Islam and by its principle of religious and cultural tolerance. Moorish Spain led the rest of Europe in science and philosophy, arts and crafts ; has Spain ever attained that leading position after the cruel expulsion of the Moors ?

With respect to other creeds also Islam followed the middle path ; it would neither accept any other creed with all its dogmas and beliefs and practices as wholly

true, nor would it reject them wholly. It enunciated the doctrine that all spiritual religions were originally divinely revealed but have suffered more or less from accretions and false dogmas and burdened with irrational and inhuman laws, practices and ritualism; their truths have been overlaid with superstitions but their nucleus can be recovered again. When the Qur'an invited the Jews and the Christians and followers of other Scriptures to create a commonwealth of believers on the basis of that which could be common between them, it was referring to this eternal foundation:

Say, People of the Book ! come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and some of us do not take others as gods, apart from God (iii. 63).

In the relation of the sexes also Islam inculcated a natural and rational middle course. All the great religions previous to Islam and contemporary with it seem to have agreed on the belief that the sex urge is of the Devil and a hindrance to spiritual life. This belief is essentially evil and the procreative urge leads to the perpetuation of this evil. Islam reversed this outlook and considered a family man superior to the ascetic that shuns family responsibility and thereby sabotages society because families are the original and natural units whose integration constitutes society even at the most primitive level. Islam sanctified marriage and freed it from irrational restrictions. Marriage was made a civil contract between two consenting parties in the presence of witnesses. As there are no ordained priests in Islam any Muslim can perform the marriage ceremony of a couple solemnly accepting each other as husband and wife. They should make all efforts to live a happy co-operative life, but if unfortunately one or the other party finds it unbearable and all efforts at conciliation made by friends and relatives fail, then divorce is allowed. The woman is given an economic status by inheritance as well by the injunction that the

husband has to vest some of his assets in the name of the wife. The question of the equality of the sexes is hotly debated in modern times. Islam has given a simple and rational verdict by establishing their moral and legal equality but pointing also to the natural differences of the sexes which result in difference of functions, a man's physical strength and physiological freedom, conferring on him the responsibility of maintenance and protection of the weaker sex, placing him only in this respect on a slightly higher level. Even a highly cultured and economically free woman instinctively feels this difference, however theoretically she may argue for all-round equality. The modern woman demands complete equality but wants man to be chivalrous and protective at the same time. The happiness of woman herself lies in the acknowledgment of this difference.

In the matter of war and peace also Islam adopted a rational, humane and practicable course. It neither eulogises war like the jingoists nor inculcates pacifism or non-resistance to aggressors; how many times it is repeated in the Qur'ān that God does not love the aggressors? War is allowed only for the protection of essential human liberties. We have in a previous chapter quoted the verse which says that if God had not raised some groups for the defence of religious liberties, then the places of worship of all creeds would have been destroyed by infidels and fanatical aggressors. The moment an aggressive group is subdued and promises to keep peace, war must stop. Islam does not inculcate lying low in the presence of tyranny. We must repeat here the famous saying of the Prophet : "If you see any evil, remove it with your hands ; if you have not the power to stop it actively, then protest vigorously against it ; if you cannot do even that, then detest it in your heart, but this is the weakest manifestation of faith." The Prophet's life itself illustrates all the three phases. Before his Prophetic Call he was a helpless and uninfluential citizen of Mecca. During this period he never participated, willingly or unwillingly, in the

idolatrous beliefs and practices of his fellow citizens and detested their immoral and irreligious life ; at that time he could do nothing more than that ; it required a further maturing and strengthening of faith to be divinely commissioned to cry aloud against manifest falsehood. About a decade was spent in vehement protests suffering heart-rending persecution. He had no power as yet to curb aggression with his own hands. He waited till he felt strong enough to strike back and use force against force. His non-resistance in Mecca did not mean that he was a pacifist who believed in the forcible stoppage of aggression as an evil. Because Jesus did not clarify in unmistakable terms his attitude towards war and peace, many Christians consider that the Sermon on the Mount must be practised even against men like Hitler. It becomes an anomalous position when chaplains accompanying Christian armies are reading passages from the New Testament inculcating turning the other cheek to the aggressor while a thousand bombers are working havoc among whole Christian populations, destroying indiscriminately the guilty and the innocent alike. Many a Christian must have a divided conscience in meeting aggression with such death-blows. A Muslim, on the other hand, when he fights in a righteous cause fights with a good conscience, as performing a divinely-sanctioned duty. Unless human nature is altered fundamentally by revolutionary re-orientation of the group prejudices and sublimation of the collective egoism of groups, war against aggression shall continue to be a holy duty. But no war is holy which is waged for territorial expansion, economic opportunity, exploitation or depriving others of their religious and cultural freedom. The Prophet never sanctioned war against a tribe that could offer assured peace. Islam offered a rational and humane via media between reckless jingoism and weak non-resisting pacifism.

Justice. Along with love and goodwill and forgiveness Islam has laid great emphasis on Justice. In a

verse quoted previously justice and generosity are bracketed together and people are advised to be just as well as generous (xvi. 90). The right of every person to get his due and the duty to give others what is due to them is the basis of justice. Legal systems are erected or ought to be erected on this foundation. But before people are exhorted to do justice, the concept of justice must needs be made clear to them. Even the most unjust systems in the past and present human history have claimed to be based on justice. If the concept of justice itself is distorted at the outset and laws made according to that perverted conception, the strict enforcement of such laws is in reality the violation of justice. If a code of laws, like the Hindu code of Manu is based on caste and class privilege, then differential and invidious treatment begins to be falsely stamped with justice. The fundamental need, therefore, is not the emphasis on justice but the definition of justice. The French Revolution raised the slogan of

regimes individuals are put in a strait jacket and everyone is stretched on a procrustean bed in the name of justice. It is considered to be just because, in the interest of solidarity of the State or the consolidation of an ideological revolution, freedom of thought and action even in the private spheres of life is dangerous. The persecution and holocaust of the Jews was justified by the Nazis as an act of just retribution because as an alien non-Aryan minority they had not identified themselves with German nationalism and hence had no right to economic and professional dominance disproportionate to their numbers. Racial domination and degrading segregation in the Apartheid of the Union of South Africa are considered legitimate, not only by the white economic exploiter and self-seeking politician, but also by a large number of white clergy. The Ku Klux Klan lynch the Negro as an act of justice and consider it just to suppress the Jew and the Catholic because they are felt as a danger to the Protestant United States. The Zionist Jews consider it to be an act of Divine Justice to inflict world Jewery on Palestine overwhelming the original inhabitants and driving them away by force as had been done by their progenitors under Joshua and later Jewish kings. The French and other European colonists in Algeria, numbering about a million, exploiting almost the entire natural and man-power resources of the country, considered it just to suppress the elementary rights of their nine million Muslim subjects and the massacre of about a hundred Muslims a day did not disturb their conscience. In India Pandit Nehru, the international moralist and sermoniser, posing as a staunch protagonist of the right of self-determination for every nation, great or small, in the remote regions of the earth, considered it just to deny that right to the Kashmiris on the plea that a fugitive feudal lord signed away the State to him when he was driven away by the indignant populace rising in revolt. In Spain the Protestant minority lives almost on the conditions of a concentration camp and this

injustice is secularly and religiously sanctioned by the alliance of Franco with the Catholic Church. The perpetrators of all these injustices seem to have deluded themselves in the belief that whatever they do is the demand of justice.

In the history of philosophy and Utopias the first great attempt to define justice and plan a just society and State is found in the *Republic* of Plato. It is the production of two geniuses of the most intellectual of ancient communities, whose lifelong task was to put virtue on a stable and objective basis and define justice in the individual and the State. The *Republic* of Plato is the high watermark of this endeavour, but which lover of freedom and universal human justice would bear to live in this ideal republic? These geniuses offered to the world only a highly fascist State where a small minority of guardians and leaders is to be generated eugenically and educationally. The majority of the people in this State shall be only dumb driven cattle who shall take no part either in making laws or in governance ; they represent only the sub-rational aspect of the human soul and hence are unfit to take part in free exercise of reason. This Utopian State does not believe in the intrinsic worth of every human being and bars opportunities of free development to the majority. This was for Plato an ideal pattern of justice. The freedom-loving Athenians could not be expected to abdicate their liberties in this artificially created rigid caste system. The Hindus actually created something analogous with results deplored by humanity. Totalitarians and fascists of modern times have also attempted to actualise this Utopia.

Islam tackled the problem of justice starting with a religious metaphysical foundation. It said that the Creator of the universe is just, and the entire creation is based on Truth and Justice. There are no regions of darkness in the entire universe where chaos or tyranny has its sway ; the universe is not partitioned between God and the Devil in eternal strife. In the symbolic

language of the Qur'ān, Pardise is co-extensive with the heavens and the earth, meaning thereby that the entire Cosmos is governed by law and harmony ; harmony and justice hold together the various parts of the Cosmos. The Creative Word is created with Truth and Justice, and entire creation is supported by justice ;

And the world of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly (vi. 116).

Give full measure and weigh with justice (vi. 153 ; vii. 85 ; xi. 85).

Moral injustice entered the world with the creation of man because he was endowed with liberty to violate the law of his being, should he choose to transgress it. The allegory about the creation of a freely willing being is given in the Qur'ān to describe this revolutionary act. The entire creation governed by inviolable laws refused to accept this risky gift of free will, but man stepped in where angels feared to tread, not realising that the misuse of this gift may involve him in stupidity and tyranny—wrong use of reason making a fool of him and misdirected will making him a tyrant over himself and others.

Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and feared from it, and man carried it ; surely he is unjust, ignorant (xxxiii. 72).

Continuing the legend of Adam and Eve the Qur'ān alludes to the Fall but remoulds the whole legend in the interest of its ideology, and imports into it a notion of justice not found in other versions of this legend which were made the basis of another creed. According to the Qur'ānic version, the Fall was a demonstration of man's gift of free will ; initially only an act of disobedience could prove it. The Christian version makes Eve the first victim of the Devil's incitement ; she succumbed to the temptation and dragged Adam after her by persuasion. The English-speaking children sing in their nursery rhyme :

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water ;
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

But in the Christian dogma it was Jill who first fell down and Jack came tumbling after. All the bitter things said about woman in early and medieval Christianity originated in this accusation ; every woman in the world became an instrument of the Devil and the daughters of Eve, the first woman, have to suffer the pangs of childbirth as a consequence of her sin. The Qur'ān wanted to do justice to woman ; therefore in relating this story it made a significant change and said that the disobedience was a joint and several commitment of both, and man was not misled by woman. It is, therefore, unjust to accuse woman of something that concerns the undivided essence of humanity indicating that in human society men and women rise and fall together. Then, again, Christian dogma is guilty of making God infinitely unjust and revengeful by declaring the sin of Adam and Eve unforgiveable. The father and mother had eaten sour grapes, but the teeth of all the sons and daughters shall be set on edge through countless generations till the Doomsday. The doctrine of Original Sin first presented emphatically by St Augustine became the basis of dogmatic Christianity for all times ; denial of it is tantamount to heresy though in this respect the number of heretics has increased very much among many Protestants and free-thinking Christians. Islam repudiated the doctrine of Original Sin, because it represents an unjust God and so revengeful that worshipping such a God would not make the worshipper just and merciful having such a model before him. The emphasis on Original Sin was laid by dogmatic Christianity to give a foundation to belief in Atonement by vicarious suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. God had not the power to forgive humanity for the sin of Adam and Eve ; His stern sense of justice should be satisfied by nothing less

than the blood sacrifice of His only son who, in spite of his complete innocence, should allow himself to be punished for the otherwise unforgiveable hereditary sin of humanity. Firstly, the entire humanity had to be born tainted and sinful—the first act of peculiar justice of a God who beats Chingez Khan and Tamerlane in inflicting undeserved cruelty, and then comes the remedy which is worse than the disease : the remedy lay in the murder of the most innocent of all creatures. Islam emphatically repudiated all this because such a God could not ask His creatures to be just and merciful. God is meant to serve as an ideal of human conduct. If His justice and mercy have dictated all this, then man would be better shifting for himself without such an exemplar. Islam presented a just God Who is merciful at the same time. He has made man a responsible being. Man is born with potentialities both for good and for evil because he is a free being. With the risky gift of freedom which cuts both ways and with reason that may be clouded by passion, he may err and do wrong things. But guiding himself rightly he may also do virtuous deeds. Repentance after a wrong act may not only wipe away the black spots of his sin but may lift him to greater heights because of this experience. According to the Qur'an, Adam after his repentance was made the ruler of the earth. The description of Adam in the Qur'an is meant to point to the potentialities guided by a just and merciful Providence who guides man towards Divine purposes when he sincerely strives for truth and righteousness :

Those who strive hard for this, We will most certainly guide them in Our way (xxix. 69).

Everyone has to strive so as to improve himself. The moral consequences of an act are to be borne by the doer himself ; there is no vicariousness in the realm of the spirit. No soul bears the spiritual burden of another soul and everyone is pledged to the consequences of his own actions :

No bearer of burden shall be *u* the burden of another (vi. 165).

Every man is responsible for what he shall have wrought (iii. 21).

The Islamic conception of Justice is based on these metaphysical and ethical foundations. If the nature of God and the nature of man are such as given above, Islam proceeded further to enumerate the demands of justice. In the matter of belief, justice demands that man should worship only the one just and beneficent Creator to Whom he owes everything. As Wisdom, Justice and Creative Love are the essential attributes of God, the devoted and simple-hearted worship of such God will tend to generate and develop these attributes in the worshipper, the object of worship and the worshipper being mirrors of each other. An exalted idea of Divine Justice would work as an informing and edifying ideal for human sentiment and conduct. Associating any other power or being in this worship would be injustice and ingratitude which would not only offend God but make man divided in his loyalty to the ideal. The worship of nature-gods or gods of base human desires and phantasies is also unjust to man himself in another way. God made man in His own image, the paragon of creation, in the words of the Qur'an, God's vicegerent on earth, capable of subduing all Nature in the process of actualisation of purposes which are human and Divine at the same time. Even the spiritual agencies in God's creation, symbolised as angels, are made to pay homage to the Ideal Man. It is highly stupid that man should reverse the process and degrade himself by fearing, propitiating and worshipping the powers over which he is destined to rule through knowledge and through identification with the Source of all power. The human self takes on the complexion of that with which it identifies itself. The self of an utterly self-centred egoist suffers by narrowing itself with immediate biological urges and appetites. The self of the family man who is prepared to be unjust to everyone else out-

side the pale of the family, to grab all power and prestige for the family, becomes a familial self which is broader than his individual self but still narrow, cramped and dwarfed. A man identifying himself with property becomes a material self and, identifying himself with the sexual urge, he becomes an unsublimated libido. Even the tribal self is a victim of collective egoism and becomes unjust to human beings outside the confines of the tribe, even when the tribe has been magnified into a great nation. All such identifications make a man untrue to his real self which has been created for identification with the infinite, the Source and Ideal of existence. Being untrue to himself he cannot be true to anyone else; therefore, a man who is not a believer in God with Whom he seeks identification of will is basically an unjust man; by any lower and narrower identification the human self punishes itself by inevitable degradation, pursuing transient and corrupting ends. Single-minded devotion to God means fixing one's mind on the Highest Ideal, provided the God that a man worships represents the highest intrinsic values of existence.

The man who is just to such a God shall necessarily be just to Nature, the manifestation of God's creative and sustaining power. He would appreciate the orderliness and beauty of the natural phenomena which make a Cosmos possible. The pre-Islamic life-negating ascetic creeds were all unjust to Nature and sought God only in miracles, considered a violation of the natural order. The Qur'an is the only scripture which is free of appeal to the miracles and turns attention towards the natural order as a proof of the rationality and beneficence of existence. The seekers of miracles are rebuked vehemently in many verses. "And they say: Why has not a Sign been sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Surely Allah is able to send down a Sign, but most of them do not know" (vi. 37); "And they say: We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for

us ; or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out ; or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think ; or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us) ; or you should have a house of gold ; or you should ascend into Heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read. Say : Glory be to my Lord ; am I aught but a mortal apostle ?" (xvii. 90-93) ; "If they see every Sign, they will not believe in it" (vi. 25).

Indian religions and philosophies considered all Nature to be a Cosmic Illusion or the unhappy creation of the Will to Live as we find in Buddhistic metaphysics on which Schopenhauer built a superstructure of his nihilistic pessimistic philosophy. In Western philosophies also matter and flesh became instruments of the evil and Christian asceticism imbibed that outlook leading to disregard of Nature and mortification of the flesh. It was this hostility towards all Nature that was mainly responsible for ushering in Dark Ages after the collapse of the Graeco-Roman civilisation ; these Dark Ages are also called the Ages of Faith. The conclusion is obvious that there was a causal relation between the darkness of a perverted and benighted faith and the all-round cultural darkness. This is also an undeniable fact that Dark Ages of the West were the most enlightened ages of Muslim culture. The Qur'ān had turned the attention of the Muslims towards the beauty and orderliness of Nature. It is acknowledged by the historians of science and eminent writers like Draper and Briffault, the author of the great book, *The Making of Humanity*, that science was a gift of the Muslims to Europe. Europe acquired that outlook through Muslim science and philosophy — one of the potent factors in the cultural revolution called Renaissance when the West began doing justice to human as well as physical nature as it had never done before. Renaissance prepared the mind of Europe

for Reformation which led further to the Age of Reason and the romantic movement in art and literature. Goethe, the best product of trends created by Renaissance, Reformation and the Age of Reason, summed up the attitude of Medievalism when he said that its view of Nature was that it is the realm of darkness, and intellect is the Devil. European civilisation became creative and ameliorative when it began to do justice to human as well as physical nature, and in place of monasteries, universities and laboratories became the nurseries of thought and culture.

Europe tortured and involved itself in decimating inter-faith wars to the extent that after the Thirty-Year War the population of some parts of Germany was reduced by five per cent. Muslim history is almost free from religious wars because Islam had made inter-faith toleration and justice an essential part of the faith, prohibiting compulsion in the matter of religion and conscience. There have been dynastic and imperialistic wars and wars waged by ambitious power-intoxicated conquerors which had nothing to do with the ideology of Islam, but in no case the motivating power behind these wars was religious intolerance or coercion in matters of faith. The Muslim domains provided asylum to the victims of religious persecution. Islam never created ghettos for the Jews or practised social ostracism on the basis of racial or religious differences. There never was any crusade in Muslim history inciting the clergy and the laity to destroy the "infidel" Christians. When Pax Islamica was established the people of all creeds and ways of life were allowed to live their own lives under guarantees and charters granted by the Prophet and his immediate Successors. Later on in Muslim history we find here and there a few cases of persecution in sectarian strife but they run counter to the general tenor of Muslim culture and ethos. In Muslim civilisation you do not find the horrible instillation of Inquisition, torturing, mutilating, branding and burning of

the heretics, and massacre of the nonconformists in thousands. Islam has very few sects and tension between these is natural; occasionally there may be a sectarian riot, but all this fades into insignificance when compared with long sectarian violence and bloodshed in the West. Islam has always lived in peace with other faiths. Even when crusading Europe was hurling its mad might on the Muslim world, the Christian subjects of Muslim States who did not join or abet the fanatical invading hordes were living peacefully with their Muslim neighbours. Islam had set an example not only of tolerance but of active defence of the rights of other faiths. 'Umar the second Khulifah, built the political power of Islam by making it secure against Persian and Roman imperialism but he did not engage himself in spreading Islam by the sword; he was out to protect other faiths along with Islam so that all may enjoy complete religious liberty. There is not a single instance in the life of the Prophet or in the campaigns that followed in which a person was compelled to accept Islam at the point of the sword. A historical incident in the life of 'Umar illustrates convincingly Islam's attitude towards other faiths. While in Jerusalem, 'Umar was invited by the Patriarch to pay a visit to the Church of Holy Sepulchre. There the time came for prayer for which purpose 'Umar wished to go out. The Patriarch said that the church was also a house of prayer; he might pray there. 'Umar replied, "A Muslim could pray anywhere, all earth and every place is holy ground for that purpose, but it would be risky to pray inside the church for fear that Muslims later on, forgetting the injunctions of Islam, may make an attempt to convert this church into a mosque on the plea that their chief had offered prayers here. Let me go out to pray." Islam did not teach its followers to be unjust to other faiths. Justice lies in conceding to others what you consider to be right and just for yourself. Islam firmly established inter-faith justice.

Besides inter-faith justice Islam inculcated inter-racial, inter-tribal and international justice. It is acknowledged by all eminent historians and sociologists that no other culture, religious or secular, has succeeded in overcoming racial or colour prejudice to the extent that Islam has succeeded. Tribal pride, which is magnified in modern times in national pride and prejudice, was successfully curbed by Islam, and eternally hostile tribes of Arabia were welded into a fraternity by common belief and common way of life. The Negro Bilāl became a peer of the aristocratic Quraish. Professor Toynbee says that the Islamic world community shall continue to be an exemplar for the rest of humanity because it freed humanity from one of the greatest curses. He says that the Anglo-Saxon race is the worst criminal in this respect. The Negro problem of the United States or the racial segregationism in the Union of South Africa could never have arisen in a Muslim domain. Democracy as well as Christianity is jeopardised by this inhuman prejudice which classifies the rights and privileges of human beings by the pigmentation of their skin. The Hindu caste system, which perpetrated segregational privileges and deprivations, was based on race and colour—the white Aryans despising the dark races of India and creating a religion to sanction suppression and segregation, depriving a large portion of Indian population of rights they granted even to animals. In a religious culture which worshipped snakes and cows and monkeys the touch of a human being, kept culturally and economically depressed by religious and social isolation, is considered so polluting that tedious ceremonial becomes necessary to wipe away the evil effects of this desanctification. Buddhism was driven out of the country of its birth because of the unpardonable sin of its not recognising caste distinctions. For more than a century the military, political and economic domination of the dark continent of Africa backing the organised effort of a very large number of Christian missions, financially

supported by the proselytising zeal of prosperous Western nations, did not succeed in christianising Africa to their heart's content. Over against this all-out campaign, Islam has succeeded immensely better there without any political power, without military and economic weapons, without one organised mission. It is stated by some Christian missionaries themselves with a feeling of dismay and regret that for one African convert to Christianity ten go over to Islam and it shall not take long before Africa becomes overwhelmingly Muslim. Have they diagnosed honestly and objectively the causes of this phenomenon. The Christians preach brotherhood but do not practise it. Which coloured man would desire to become a Christian in the Union of South Africa where he shall neither be allowed to live in a white locality, nor to trade with white people, nor to worship together with them in the same church. In the rest of Africa it may not be as bad as that, but racial discrimination and domination and social segregation in various degrees is still there. The Western writers and missionaries continue to reiterate the calumny and falsehood that Islam was spread by the sword. Now that the sword has been in the hands of the Western powers, what force is spreading Islam in Africa ? Would they not believe even now that it is the same force that made Islam always acceptable to individuals and groups craving for genuine equality and brotherhood. To symbolise this global feeling of universal brotherhood, Islam made the pilgrimage to Mecca a pillar of the faith and a duty for every Muslim who could afford the journey. It is an international and inter-racial gathering of about half a billion individuals, the white, the black, the yellow and the brown, men and women, having discarded their distinctive robes, the princes and the peasants stand together, garbed in a simple and similar simple sheet, prostrating in obeisance to One God, the Creator of one humanity. Islamic fraternity is not co-extensive with the whole of humanity but it is an exemplar for other

nations and religious communities ; when they become fraternal to this extent and leave off racial and caste prejudices and repudiate the colour bar, they will become also socially healthy and well integrated. When nations have succeeded in overcoming these invidious distinctions granting social equality and equality of opportunity to their own citizens, then the goal of international and inter-faith brotherhood shall draw near. The Muslims were asked by Islam to set an example and they have done it. They have yet to perfect themselves but they are much ahead of others. Broad concepts like love and justice, in order to be useful in actual life, require to be very meticulously defined and their implications and application determined in the context of manifold types of human relation. We have given some examples of how the idea of justice, although accepted as a general principle or ideal, may become so perverted in its application to human affairs that it becomes indistinguishable from injustice and tyranny of the worst kind. Similarly, preaching love may be of little use unless this very vague sentiment is well defined. Love is always love of something and the value of love depends on the object of love. Love and justice had been inculcated by religions as well as philosophies ever since man began to formulate ideals and establish regulative principles of social behaviour. The distinctive feature of Islam that has made it more valuable for life than other religions is this that it does not rest contented with generalities but defines human ideals and values in the context of practical situation. How much evil is done in life by blind and misdirected love, how much injustice is done in the name of justice and how much tyranny is practised in the name of liberty ? The secret why Islam succeeded in creating a new world within a very short time and why it continues to appeal to millions even today, when its worldly fortunes are not very lovable; lies in the practical application of great truths, and a demonstration how eternal truths should mould the patterns

of life. One religion issues a command : "Thou shalt not kill" and then in practice enjoins massacre of whole vanquished populations without discriminating between the belligerent and the non-belligerent or the guilty and the innocent. Another religion presents a very high and spiritual ideal by asking human beings to love their enemies and leaves its followers confused when they are faced with the problem of defending the State and society against heartless aggressors and inveterate criminals. Nobody taught them when love and forgiveness become more appropriate than retaliatory punishment and when exemplary punishment becomes a necessity to hold together the social fabric. Islam gave its followers a comprehensive view of war and peace. For the very establishment and maintenance of peace, war may become necessary just as for saving the life of an individual major surgical operations become unavoidable when food and medicine fail to heal. In proof of the practical idealism of Islam let us finish this chapter by briefly summarising and recapitulating what has been said in this respect in the present and previous chapters.

(1) God is just. Justice manifested in the laws of Nature holds the fabric of existence together ; God is also Creative Love ; His qualities of *Rabb*, *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* are the originating forces of His justice, so ultimately justice is derived from love. As the Qur'ān says, God's love comprehends everything.

(2) It was the demand of love-inspired justice that man should not be born with a tainted and sinful nature.

(3) Placing an infinite task before man, justice required that he should be endowed with infinite potentialities, so that man should continue to mould himself in the image of his Creator.

(4) Man was endowed with various instincts and urges which have to be used as creative, dynamic and ameliorative forces under the guidance of reason. None of these instincts is meant to be crushed and curbed ;

they are to be used, regulated and sublimated ; therefore, a self-mortifying ascetic is unjust to himself because he is not giving its due to every life force within him. Islam prohibited monasticism and asceticism which had led spirituality astray in Hinduism, Buddhism and ascetic Christianity. A quietist isolationist ascetic is unjust to himself and to the society that gave him birth and that is expected to support him. Mere meditations and prayers divorced from man's life in society cramp the human spirit instead of raising it to supernatural heights. To a man who was devoting himself solely to prayers and fasting, the Prophet said that he was doing wrong by incapacitating himself for family responsibilities and social duties. He also rebuked a leader of prayers who made the worshippers stand too long behind him, reciting a long chapter of the Qur'an. He said : "Don't you realise that some people whose energy and patience you tax like this may be sick or old and infirm and may have to perform some other duties." Let not a man be unjust to himself and to others even in his prayers and devotions.

(5) Man must not be unjust to woman. She has the same origin as man : she is not to be shunned as a snare of the Devil. She is to be honoured as a mother who bore the man in pain and brought him up with uncomplaining sacrifice of personal comfort. The Prophet joined her with prayer and perfume as sources of edifying experience and he said that Paradise lies at the feet of the mother ; love and respect for motherhood earn for a person the highest spiritual reward. In order to be just to woman Islam made marriage a civil contract so that, while giving herself to a man, she may be able to propose conditions for her convenience and security that shall be legally binding. Islam considered it unjust that she should be compelled to live on with a husband who has ceased to be loving and dutiful or has, in any way, become an undesirable companion. Presenting a reasonable plea before a judge she can obtain divorce. The Prophet granted divorce to a woman on

the plea of extreme incompatibility without her charging the man with cruelty or any other guilt. In most civilisations women are not earning members and their economic dependence makes them insecure and subject to masculine dominance. Islam tried to do justice to them by granting them as much economic independence as is possible for a non-earning member of society. Islam gave her a prescribed share in inheritance and also made it binding on the husband that he should part with some of his assets according to his means and transfer them to his bride. Whatever she has inherited or received from her husband is legally her own property, and if she has been able to earn something by labour or investment is her own to be spent or disposed of as she likes without seeking the consent of the husband; it is a right that even highly civilised nations did not grant women till they fought for it in recent times.

(6) Islam did not say: "Love your enemies," because love cannot be ordered, but it said: "Be just even to your enemies," because justice is a legal demand that can be fulfilled. The Qur'anic injunction is: "Beware lest the enmity of a group tend to make you unjust towards it" (v. 8). Forgiving an enemy is also possible and desirable under certain circumstances. The Prophet forgave a whole city full of his enemies who had tortured him and his associates for more than a decade and killed so many of his followers; he forgave them because he felt that retaliation would not reform them and returning good for evil would convert their enmity into friendship.

(7) Be just to the followers of other faiths. Revere the spiritual founders of other spiritual faiths making it a part of your conviction that God had left no human community without guidance. Faith is a matter of free and voluntary conviction. Therefore, compulsion in the matter of faith is irrational and useless. It lies in the nature of human groups to differ in beliefs and practices. Let all faiths live in peaceful co-existence. Persuasion,

not coercion, is the decent way of convincing others of what you believe to be true. If you find yourself engaged in religious controversies, don't use bitter and offensive language. The Prophet is commanded in the Qur'an to use three ways of bringing home to others what he believed to be true :

Invite others to the way of the Lord with wisdom and with preaching and in controversy use a graceful manner (xvi. 125).

Islam enjoins on its followers to respect the places of worship of other faiths and even in military campaigns not to touch the priests. We have already quoted the instance of 'Umar refraining from praying in the Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem lest at some later time the Muslims, forgetting the injunctions of Islam, may make it a pretext to convert it into a mosque. Islamic broad-mindedness is made clear in the Qur'an holding out the prospect of well-being and salvation to the followers of all theistic creeds who believe in the Hereafter and lead virtuous lives (ii. 62).

The Jews and Christians are rebuked for professing to have the monopoly of truth and salvation. The Qur'an declares that whoever turns his face towards God and does good to his fellow beings deserves the best of rewards (ii. 111-112). Elsewhere (xlvi. 13-14) the appeal is universal, addressed to all human groups that, notwithstanding differences of modes of life, they should strive to realise the values of life because it is possible to believe in the fundamentals of good life in spite of differences of dogmas and ceremonies. This is the height of tolerance and a positive appeal to come to agreement in spheres where it is possible. One of the reasons that Islam spread so rapidly in parts of the Roman and the Persian Empires was that the people of different faiths in these parts were suffering terribly from the religious persecution of creeds and sects. The Muslims entered these regions as deliverers. They announced that they shall not convert anyone by force nor harass anyone because of faith, nor would

they allow the followers of other creeds to persecute one another. The people heaved a sigh of relief after a long history of persecution. Hitherto almost all European writers used to repeat the falsehood that Islam was spread by the sword. Now that a better knowledge of history has made that charge untenable, they have shifted the ground and have begun to say that Islamic territorial conquest was motivated not by forced conversion but by levying tribute on the conquered people. How Islam became responsible for maintaining peace between other contending faiths can be borne out by the historical fact that Muslims continue to be the custodians of the Church of Holy Sepulchre because the Christian sects cannot agree on a peaceful way of managing it. Different portions are allotted to different Christian sects (except the Protestants who emerged on the historical scene long after this arrangement, and the old sects would not let them have a portion) and Muslims are entrusted with the duty of keeping the peace between them, seeing that no sect trespasses the allotted portion of another sect. In inter-faith disputes they trust the Muslim to be a more just umpire than themselves.

(8) Islam did not consider it just to impose its own system of law and justice on the communities in its domains that had their own codes. When the Jews in Medina brought their disputes before the Prophet trusting him to be an impartial judge, he judged their cases by their own laws. Throughout Muslim history this practice has continued, although European powers misused this concession very much in the system of capitulations imposed on a weakened Ottoman Empire. The right of religious communities to be governed by their own personal laws is not conceded even by the most democratic of modern governments, but they continue to blame the Muslims for fanaticism and intolerance!

(9) Islam has also pointed a way of settling international disputes. Besides emphasising that treaties

between groups and nations must be honoured under all circumstances and prohibiting wars of aggression, it laid down a procedure for the settlement of disputes primarily among Muslim parties, but applied in a wider international sphere. This would be the only way of making a league of nations an effective instrument of peace and justice. The United Nations has not been able to enforce its decisions and a recalcitrant aggressor continues to defy it because nobody is prepared to use force to enforce its decisions. The Qur'an has warned the nations that unless they could get together to exert a collective pressure against an unjust unyielding party, international justice will remain a dream of the idealists.

And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command (xlii. 9).

We end this chapter by quoting a few verses inculcating justice towards all, strong or weak, friend or foe.

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) (xvi. 90).

You cannot resort to polygamy whatever be the necessity of it if you cannot do equal justice to more than one wife (iv. 3).

You are specially ordained to do justice to the orphans (iv. 127).

Give full measure and weigh with justice (vi. 153).

Let a scribe write it down between you with fairness . . . but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, let his guardian dictate with fairness (ii. 282).

O people who believe! stand for justice in evidence in the name of God and let not the hostility of a community make you inclined to be unjust to it. You must be just under all circumstances; justice stands nearer to piety (v. 8).

O Prophet! say: "I have been ordered to believe in what God has revealed and do justice between you" (xiii. 15).

Believers are ordained to do justice even if thereby they or their parents and relatives suffer a loss, and let not your personal wishes make you deviate from justice (iv. 135).

Don't bribe the officers of the State to let you devour unjustly the goods of others (ii. 188).

When you are made a judge, be just, for God loves the just (v. 42).

The Prophet said :

On the Day of Judgment the only asylum shall be in the shadow of God and seven kinds of persons shall enjoy that protection ; the just ruler shall be there among the seven (Bukhārī, "Kitāb-ul-Muḥārabin").

The Prophet set an example of justice in all dealings and his well-guided Successors followed his example. 'Umar is known for his uncompromising justice ; he did not spare his own son from a severe punishment ; and in the short inaugural address the Prophet's immediate Successor Abū Bakr summed up the duties of the head of the State in one simple declaration : "I will weaken the strong man if he is in the wrong, and strengthen the weak if the right is on his side."

ISLAM'S IDEAL MAN

THE value of a religion lies essentially in the type of man it wants to create. The picture of the Ideal Man has varied in different religions and philosophies. In philosophical Hinduism the Ideal Man is the man who has attained the knowledge of the Absolute, and realised the identity of the human and the Divine self. He can attain this ideal in solitary meditation unconcerned with social responsibilities. For him total existence is the result of *Maya* and *Avidya*, Illusion and Ignorance; nothing is real but the One Transcendent Absolute beyond all attributes and limitations. The Ideal Man, seeks oneness with this Absolute. As human affairs and social and family responsibilities involve a person in the Cosmic Illusion, the man who can avoid them altogether, and retires to a cave alone with the Absolute, stands higher than the man who is striving for other ends, however exalted they may be. The *Bhagvad Gita*, believed to embody the essence of the teachings of Krishna, the God Incarnate, strikes a different note and recommends the disinterested performance of duty as a better approach to Reality. Everyone must live according to his *Dharma*, a word very difficult to translate into any other language. It includes beliefs as well as practices. The *Bhagvad Gita* does not repudiate the caste system and it gives as one of the perils of war that it will create a social chaos as a result of confusion of castes. The *Dharma* of every caste and numerous sub-castes is different; an ideal Brahman is different from an ideal Kshatrya, and the outcaste's *Dharma* would be to

remain contented with his *Karma*-created status. Even in this book, venerated as a scripture, one does not find a well-integrated Ideal Man. Krishna himself could not be taken as an Ideal Man because he is God Incarnate. In the Hindu metaphysical religion morality belongs to the realm of appearance and the Ideal Man is the man who has transcended this illusion. We had an opportunity of meeting a Hindu of modern education who had left his wife and children and wandered as a Sadhu. It was difficult to argue with him on the basis of ethics and human values; when told that his act of desertion of the family was immoral and if every family-man left off his wife and children the human race shall perish, he replied that that could be a very desirable end because souls have to be delivered from the tragic cycle of births and deaths. In Hindu society a moral man is respected, but the Ideal Man is still the world-renouncing Sadhu who has the choice of being meditatively immersed in the Eternal Silence of the Absolute, or condescend to teach and preach his creed to deliver others and persuade them to be like himself. In this respect original Buddhism was not much different. Its Ideal Man is the *Bhikshu*, the mendicant monk who is supposed to have annihilated all desire in preparation for *Nirvana*, beyond birth and death and beyond good and evil, transcending all the categories of existence. In Christianity, Jesus should have been considered as the Ideal Man, but very soon after Paul his teaching and his example got inextricably mixed up with pagan mysteries and, instead of being valued and imitated in his humanity, he became God Almighty himself who had descended to the level of sinful humanity to satisfy God's justice by vicarious punishment and sacrifice. He ceased to be an exemplar to be followed and held as an ideal because the whole creed was centred in crucifixion, resurrection and atonement for the sins of others. All great Prophets had come to teach human beings to get rid of sinfulness and attain well-being here and hereafter by striving to be

just, honest and forgiving. But dogmatic Christianity asserted that no one can save himself by rational thinking and moral effort ; only acceptance of Jesus as a Saviour who had died on the cross to atone for the uncommitted sin of others was necessary for salvation. To this dogma was added the apocalyptic expectation of a speedy end of the old world order when Jesus would return to reign as King in the kingdom of heaven. The Ideal Men would be those who lived in that kingdom. Till then there was nothing better than to wait and avoid getting entangled in the meshes of a sinful world which is doomed to perish. Jesus had not bothered himself with political, economic and cultural problems, so why should the followers concern themselves with these mundane activities ? As a natural consequence Christianity gradually drifted into asceticism and monkery and the Ideal Man became the monk or the saint like the Hindu Sadhu or the Buddhist Bhikshu. In the beginning the bishops also used to marry but with the development of the ascetic outlook sex relations even in wedlock acquired the taint of sinfulness and celibacy became an essential of spirituality till Luther the monk revolted against it and married a nun.

Greek philosophy developed a cult of Reason, and ideal life was visualised as the life of *Theoria*, the contemplation of eternal idea and forms and *entelechies*. Moral, social and practical life in all its aspects dealt with the realm of transience and change where idea is mixed with matter and being is compromised with non-being. The Good is only to be contemplated in its eternal purity. But it was difficult for a moralist like Socrates to rest contented only with the contemplation of eternal forms without an urge to inform and mould the State and society, reflecting the eternal patterns of justice. The Utopian Republic of Plato was the outcome of this speculation. The Ideal Man in this republic is the philosopher who must first be born aright by eugenical selection. Then this prospective Ideal Man has to undergo a long process of

physical, mental, moral and dialectical training and get some practical experience to join the caste of the elite who will be rulers and guardians of the State. They shall not know their parents, nor have families and private property. But these Ideal Men cannot act as exemplars for the majority of citizens who have families and properties and follow various professions. These Ideal Men shall be inveterate haters of democracy not allowing anyone outside the circle of the elite to dabble in public affairs; they are born to follow as the philosophical aristocracy is born to guide, dictate and lead. This scheme did not materialise and the propounders knew it very well that it could not be actualised till the philosophers became kings or kings became philosophers. Greek philosophy finally drifted into Neoplatonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism. Neoplatonism taught the doctrine of Emanation from the Ineffable One, descending from Reason and Soul and Life finally into the abyss of dark matter equated with non-being. The Ideal Man was the man who ascended this ladder again to realise in ecstasy the Ineffable Transcendent One which is without will and consciousness and completely devoid of all attributes. The Ultimate of Neoplatonism is almost the same as the *Nirvana* of Buddhism and the Absolute of Vedanta. Some individuals can succeed in crossing all the hurdles of life, mind and matter, and enjoy liberation. Such philosophies always end in life-negating asceticism and hold no ideals of thought and conduct that could be serviceable in the amelioration of human life. Neoplatonism, like its analogues in the East, failed to present an Ideal Man whose outlook and conduct could serve as a regulative force for bettering the lot of common humanity. Stoicism tried to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of Graeco-Roman creeds and philosophies. Its metaphysics was pantheistic, identifying completely God and Universe and equating both with Cosmic Reason. Its Ideal Man was the sage who lived according to Nature.

He was supposed to have curbed all emotions and passions; his virtue was an embodiment of cold reason. He classified nations into good, bad and indifferent; only rational and virtuous will was intrinsically good and its opposite was bad and all the rest of life including health, wealth and happiness was indifferent. Their Ideal Man was the personification of cold logic; he was devoid of all love and sympathy; he stood like a statue unaffected by pleasures and pains of life. This Ideal Man remained only an unapproachable theoretical creation, although the emphasis on universal reason and virtue regardless of consequences created some fine specimens of humanity. Quite contrary to this philosophy was Epicureanism which was materialistic and hedonistic. Its Ideal Man was the man who considered pleasure to be the only intrinsic good, but as the greedy pursuit of pleasure involves pain and, according to the paradox of pleasure, direct pursuit of pleasure is a self-defeating process, therefore a wise man should restrict his desires and wants to avoid frustration and worry. According to Epicurus, belief in gods is irrational and creates superstitious fear; therefore, only a non-believer can rest in peace. Hedonism and materialism throughout the history of thought have been inseparable allies; the Ideal Man of Epicurus is a materialist. He does not bother about social and political affairs and does not struggle for reforms because that will involve suffering. He tries to be a harmless escapist; as a matter of fact he does not want accumulation or intensification of pleasures, but is desirous of peace of mind; in outward appearance he might become indistinguishable from a saint; in the attempt to avoid emotional disturbances to retain mental equilibrium and equanimity, he might approach the ideal of the Stoic, although ideologically both have started from opposite ends.

Since the rise of modern science the concept of the Ideal Man has changed considerably. According to

the naturalistic outlook, a person who acknowledges any source of knowledge except his senses and scientific regulation of the sense-data is foolish and superstitious. His conduct also must accord with these sources. He believes that the Realm of Nature is not the Realm of Values. Human values are rooted only in human subjectivity. According to him, Nature is non-moral or positively immoral and it is for man to subject it to moral ends. Such a man is an atheist or at least an agnostic, a denier of the objectivity and reality of moral and spiritual values. For him only physico-mathematical phenomenal world is the only objectively valid reality. With respect to the relation of man to Nature he has come round to the position of Greek Sophists, and his denial of spiritual realities has brought him back to the materialism of Epicurus. According to this outlook, the Ideal Man is one whose thought and conduct are regulated by naturalistic science.

After this brief survey let us turn now to the concept of the Ideal Man in Islam. In the first place the concept of the Ideal Man is given in the Qur'ān in the legend of Adam and Eve. In this allegorical legend Adam stands both as an individual and as an embodiment of the essence and ideal of humanity. According to the Qur'ān, man came last in the creational process. Nature was already there and the Divine agencies called angels, interpreted by some Muslim philosophers like Rūmī as the inviolable regulative laws of Nāture, pre-existed man. The creation of man was viewed by angels as a risky step bringing into creation free will that would result in chaos and disobedience, but God insisted on taking this risky and revolutionary step because of purposes unknown to the rest of creation. Entire creation trembled at the idea of accepting such a gift which the Qur'ān calls a Trust; it was only man who accepted it. The objecting angels were silenced by God by granting Adam knowledge of all things which the

angels did not possess. They finally prostrated before Adam except Satan, the embodiment of disobedience. According to this ideological allegory, man started with the dual gift of rationality and free will. All organic life before the emergence of man was regulated by natural laws which could not be violated and by instincts which reached their appointed goals unerringly; reason that was immanent in Nature became conscious in man and was entrusted with the regulation of instincts which, left to themselves, ceased to be unerring. Adam demonstrated his free will by an act of disobedience, but the reason within him realised that he had acted wrongly. Adam showed repentance and was forgiven. It was here that Islam differed from dogmatic Christianity about the nature and consequences of sin. Sin is not an incurable disease or an unforgivable evil. Its effects can be wiped away by turning away from it and by doing good deeds as an effective antidote. Man can do good as well as evil, and he is not bound to do either; and one man's sin is not passed on to another man either biologically or psychologically or as a spiritual inheritance. According to the Qur'an, Adam was made God's representative on earth to which all Nature would submit if he used his reason and free will correctly as all the Divine agencies bowed before him. Islam's Ideal Man can fall but he can rise after the fall to greater heights enriched by experience. He can be a true representative of God if he makes his will accord with the will of God as manifested in external Nature as well as in his own soul. Such ideality is sometimes actualised in greater or lesser degree in human individuals. Man can never become an automaton of absolute truth and righteousness; to err shall continue to be human; he shall continue to learn by the method of trial and error. The story of Adam as given in the Qur'an symbolises the nature as well as the immense potentialities of humanity. The ideal of humanity in possession of absolute knowledge of all reality and immune from error and

shortcomings is meant only to be a regulative ideal pointing towards the progressive realisation of human destiny. The realities of God's creation are infinite, and a finite being can never encompass them in their entirety. Man should continue to progress in knowledge, but he can never reach a stage when he could say there is nothing further to be known because, as the Qur'an says, God's creative words are infinite and they cannot be exhausted if all the trees are turned into pens and all the existing oceans and many more are turned into ink to describe them. The Qur'an asks the Muslims to continue to pray for increase of knowledge. Agnosticism is an essential part of Islamic gnosticism, and the greatest of prophets exclaims : "O God, I have not known Thee as Thou ought to be known." Man's humility ought to increase with his knowledge because the unknown and unseen shall always be immensely greater than the seen. So Islam's Ideal Man is not the man who is in possession of infinite knowledge, nor does he consider himself free from errors and faults. With respect to knowledge, he possesses no more than what God has revealed to him. In all other spheres others may know much more than himself. Islam's Ideal Man is essentially a humble man claiming no absoluteness and divinity. The ignorant and hostile critics of Islam point to these humble confessions of the Prophet as a sign of his fallibility. But this distinguishing trait of the Prophet makes him supremely human. Jesus was made into a perfect incarnation of God Himself by his erring and exaggerating followers but the New Testament record presents him preaching and practising meekness and humility. He is humble like Muhammad, not even attributing goodness to himself but to His Father in the Heavens. How right he was, because perfection belongs to the Ideal or God alone and the highest of human beings can assimilate it only imperfectly, though in a much greater degree than others, which makes him a guide and a model for others.

In the matter of religious belief or metaphysical

outlook, Islam's Ideal Man is an uncompromising monotheist. For him One God is the Supreme Source of all reality, both manifested and unmanifested. He is "the first and the last," "the outer and the inner," or, in philosophical language, appearance as well as reality. He can be approached through His outer manifestation in physical Nature or His inner manifestation in the realm of the spirit. This Being is immanent in His creation as well as transcendent because He transcends all that He creates or manifests. His seeker can seek Him through outer phenomenal Nature or through the noumenal and psychical reality in his own self (*Qur'ān*, li. 21). He can be approached through knowledge acquired through the common channels of reason and the senses or through ultra-rational revelation. Direct communion with Him is possible through prayer and meditation. Man requires no intermediaries between himself and his God. The Ideal Man is characterised in the *Qur'ān* as "free from fear and grief". From the purest kind of service which is rendered out of love or friendship, man ascends to be a friend and companion of his Master. At the highest stage the relation of God and man becomes a relation of friendship and companionship. Although man does not cease to be a servant of God at any stage, ultimately service is transformed into friendship. With an omnipotent and omniscient friend constantly by his side, a man has no reason to fear anything or grieve over anything. He cannot fear any power because the greater power of his powerful friend protects him; he cannot grieve over any loss because nothing of real value is ever lost. God is the great conservator of all intrinsic values, and true religion in its last analysis is a belief in the conservation of value.

Now surely the friends of Allah—they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (x. 62).

Fear is at the root of so much mental and moral evil, and modern psychology has described a very large

number of phobias which distort and cramp mental and physical energy. Rationalism frees man to some extent from superstitious dread of the powers of Nature, and psychoanalysis has devised many methods of delivering suffering humanity from manifold phobias that lurk in the dark cellars of the subconscious mind. But the efficacy of all these remedies is much less than strong belief in God which overcomes all fears. A great modern psychologist, Jung, has admitted that sincere believers in God Who is Omnipotent and Merciful become more immune from phobias than others. Besides fear the other paralysing condition is grief. How could a believer in God succumb to grief which makes a man feel helpless and hopeless? Islam teaches that no one need despair of God's help and mercy; "only the infidels despair". Islam's Ideal Man grieves not, though he may be sad on occasions. He is not depleted of human emotions and sentiments like the ideal Stoic sage, but negative paralysing emotions do not grip his mind and cause no lasting damage. As the Prophet said, "It is natural to shed tears at the death of dear ones but it is wrong to indulge in lamentations; for a good Muslim there are no sack cloth and ashes."

Islam's Ideal Man is not a world-renouncing ascetic trying vainly to save his soul in isolation by privations and self-mortification. He is a normal man with a profession or a trade, performing some useful social function. He has a family to support which he becomes a wage-earner. The Prophet said: "A wage-earning honest worker is a friend of God." Earning an honest living by useful work can also lead a man to the highest level of existence, designated as friendship of God. Not ascetic practices but socially useful work is real worship. Islam emphasised useful work as worship. The Prophet looked at the calloused hands of a Muslim worker which showed some black and hardened portions of the skin and asked him if he had inscribed something on his hands with ink. The worker replied:

“No, I break hard ground with a hoe which leaves these traces on the hand.” Thereupon the Prophet kissed his hands ; it was kissing the hands of a “friend of God”.

An Ideal Man’s religion as well as morality is of universal nature. The universality of his religion means that it is not tribal, national or ethnic. His religion is based on some general principles that are universal like the laws of Nature ; whoever accepts these truths and moulds his conduct according to them is fundamentally his co-religionist. But a human being, however universal and cosmopolitan his outlook may be, is born in some community or group, bound together by a number of common beliefs and similarities of customs and habits, rituals and ceremonies, and by common traditions. These common elements tend to create an in-group and out-group psychology. It is impossible for any man to belong to the whole of humanity in the same way. Generally, in human groupings sympathies and antipathies are determined and governed by irrational prejudices. An Ideal Man would create a rational, moral and practical basis for his preferences. Man’s energies and his opportunities are limited, and in practical life he is bound to create priorities. If he belongs to a religious community, the welfare of this community shall have a natural priority in his social purposes. If he is a family man, the maintenance of his own wife and children shall be his primary duty, although many other families may be in need of such assistance. It would be a Utopian idealistic demand unacceptable to human nature that he should love the children of others as he loves his own children. Similarly, a good man born in a particular country and nation must be a patriot and develop a feeling of loyalty demanding sacrifices to protect its legitimate interests, but he could not be an aggressive nationalist, harbouring feeling of hostility for those who live across the border, just as a good family man, although concentrating his energies on the welfare of his own family, is also a good neigh-

bour ready to assist his neighbours in time of need to the extent that it does not violate the rights of his own family. If he belongs to a creed, he shall have special affinities with fellow believers. If he stands up for a cause, then those who oppose that cause cannot expect that love and co-operation from him which he offers to his supporters. So we see that the in-group and out-group differentiation is unavoidable under all circumstances, but a rational and spiritual man restrains the irrationalities that tend to develop in this psychology. One may devote oneself to one's tribe without developing a narrow tribal self with a double and contradictory standard of morality and conduct for those who belong and those who do not belong to the tribe. It is only the limitations of a man's energies and opportunities and the necessity of concentration of sympathetic action in the interest of effectiveness that can lead even a spiritual man to be motivated by an in-group feeling. A finite man cannot infinitise his affinities and sympathies. Even Jesus, a great spiritual leader who identified God and religion with universal love, had to confine his charitableness to the community that he intended to reform, because he could not afford to dissipate his love and energy by spreading it out over the Jew and the Gentile alike. That is the only reasonable explanation of his indignant utterance, as recorded in the New Testament, that he is not prepared to throw the bread of the children to dogs. He could not have the same tender feeling for those whom he called "a generation of vipers," and others just meek and righteous who accepted his invitation to enter the "Kingdom of Heaven". Muhammad had to wage a defensive war against those who had mobilised all their forces to crush him and his creed of universal peace. It was not inculcating a double standard of morality when he taught his helpers and associates that they should be soft and kind among themselves and tough against those who wanted to crush their cause by violence and aggression. To sum up, an Ideal Man is not the man whose false

cosmopolitanism has depleted his mind of all patriotic sentiment. To him the verdict of Scott would apply: "Breeths there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself has said, This is my own, my native land." Muhammad, who founded a religion that transcended territorial boundaries, held healthy patriotism as a part of spirituality. He preached and practised peaceful co-existence with all sorts of groups; still he would not equate believers and non-believers in every respect. He preached toleration and justice for all irrespective of group differences, but he stood firmly for the group of fellow believers who lived for a common cause. Even the Ideal Man is not a Utopian univeralist. Natural and ideological affinities do create priorities and, properly exercised, they do not diminish a man's spirituality; on the other hand, they give it a practical scope.

Islam repeated the teaching about good neighbourliness found in the Old and New Testaments and emphasised it still further by extending its scope. According to the Qur'an, a good believer and a righteous man is one who is good to his neighbours; firstly, the neighbour who also happens to be your relative; secondly, the one who is not related to you; and, thirdly, the man who is associated with you in any work or undertaking. "(Be good to) the neighbour of (your) kin and alien neighbour, and the companion in a journey" (iv. 36). Islam as a practical religion did not confine its teaching to the general injunction "to love your neighbour as yourself," but established priorities. First comes the neighbour who, besides spatial vicinity, is near to you in other respects also—it may be blood-relationship or common faith; then comes the neighbour who is your neighbour simply because he lives in your neighbourhood and has no other bond with you besides this—he may be a man of another tribe or another faith, but in spite of this difference he can claim your help and friendship; the last comes the man who is associated with you in any

other manner. The commentators are agreed that it means all types of nearness: two fellow travellers, two fellow students, two fellow workers or two partners in business. In the context of the modern world the meaning of neighbourliness must be extended still further; now all faiths and all nations have become neighbours. Religious communities that live side by side must become friendly and not create ghettos for communal segregation or resent the presence of a racially different family in the neighbourhood as is the case even in countries proud of their democracy. The Qur'an said that the religious or cultural stranger comes immediately next to the neighbour whose nearness is intensified because of other cementing factors. On account of this teaching the non-Muslims always lived in Muslim neighbourhood in security and peace. Once 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar had a goat slaughtered in his house. He asked his family if they had sent a portion of it to their Jewish neighbour because he, said, he had heard the Prophet say that God revealed to him the rights of a neighbour with such repeated emphasis that he thought that a neighbour, irrespective of differences of creed, might be allotted a share in inheritance. The commentators are agreed that a neighbour is entitled to very friendly treatment, although he may belong to a different faith. It is time that in the interest of universal peace different nations and faiths whom modern life has made neighbours should begin to practise this teaching so that religious and racial segregation and national hostilities may come to an end. A good man must be a good neighbour in the extended meaning of neighbourliness.

Another essential trait of a good man's character is that he is humble. It is easy to be humble when one is poor and downtrodden; this is a kind of forced humility which a beggar often exhibits in his talk and behaviour as the Persian poet Sa'dī has rightly observed. A great man in any sphere of life is often conscious of his superiority to those around him. If he

is intellectually head and shoulders above others, he cannot help feeling the difference; but if he is a good man, he feels humble because what he knows is an infinitesimal portion of the immensity of things which he does not know. Compared to uncomprehended infinity, the difference between the savant and the relatively ignorant dwindles into insignificance. One of the greatest of philosophers, Socrates, declared as the wisest man in Athens by the oracle at Delphi, said that he knew nothing. When the contradiction was pointed out to him he said that he himself and the oracle were both true: the ignorance of others is a compound ignorance; they are ignorant but are unaware of their ignorance, but "my wisdom lies in the realisation of my ignorance". One of the greatest scientists, Newton, who ushered in a new era in physical science and astronomy, is reported to have declared that he was like a child playing with pebbles on the shore of an immensely vast ocean of knowledge. Islam declared it to be a characteristic of the spiritual leaders of mankind. Almost all creeds other than Islam deified their spiritual founders and, placing them out of the pale of humanity, really made them unfit to be exemplars for weak and struggling humanity. How could omniscience and omnipotence feel humility because undisputed greatness is an attribute of the infinite, creative and sustaining power only.

In the heavens and the earth greatness belongs to God only because of His infinite power and wisdom (xlv. 37).

All genuinely religious men, if they practise a true religion, are humble men; they consider themselves as servants of God, and how could a servant feel proud in the presence of the master? It is only when a man has attained power over others that his character is put to test; in immature characters power has always a corrupting influence. The moment a spiritual leader begins to assume airs and overawe people, that is a sure sign that he has fallen. The Prophet of Islam

never called those who had begun to believe with him as his followers ; the word that he used was *Ashāb* which means "companions"; this designation mirrors his character and the spirit of his teaching. Instead of lording it over his followers who had become really only his fellow-believers, he is divinely commanded to humble himself before them with loving kindness. It is repeated three times in the Qur'ān :

And make yourself gentle to the believers (xv. 88).

And be kind to him who follows you of the believers (xxvi. 215).

And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion (xvii. 24).

Except in matters revealed by God, he had the habit of making decisions after consultation with his associates and in many cases he would prefer their advice to his own judgment, and said that in mundane affairs others may know better than he. He would never act as a diviner or fortune-teller. He claimed no knowledge of the unseen and the unknown except what had been granted to him by God to guide others. He was afraid that with the passage of time his followers later on may deify him as the followers of other religions had done. He said that he was primarily a servant of God and his prophethood is only a phase of that status. He was a slave and a prophet. No stranger could easily pick him up from among his associates as their leader ; when walking with them he would never walk one step a head of them because they were not his retinue. He never walked with a strut and even walking on level ground he walked with the gait of a man descending from a height. This is given in the Qur'ān as the characteristic gait of the humble servants of the Lord, along with another trait that when foolish people address them offensively, they wish them "Peace" and pass on without any back talk (xxv. 63). In the Qur'ān, wise Luqmān also advises his son that he must not walk struttingly because God does not

love the vainglorious and the conceited. A humble man should not only walk humbly but also converse in low tones; only the donkey shouts with disgusting loudness. The Prophet said that a humble man also dresses simply even if he could afford expensive and gaudy raiment (Tirmidhi, "Abwāb-ul-Zuhd"). The Prophet set this example. His food continued to be the food of a poor worker and peasant and on days together nothing was cooked on his hearth. It happened very often that he would ask his family if there was anything to eat and when answered in the negative he would say: "Let us convert it into a fast"; how beautifully he would convert this want into a virtue! The virtual ruler of all Arabia continued to live in a mud hut with no furniture, not even a cot to lie on; and he possessed only two pairs of rough clothes. He swept his floor, milked his goats, mended his shoes and helped in performing all the domestic chores. While going out for humble purchases he would offer to bring some necessities for helpless solitary women in the neighbourhood. All the power that he gained never made him deviate from his simple habits. Except one attendant, Anas, he had no other servant, and him also he never treated as a servant. Anas related that during many years of service the Prophet never even once scolded him. Once he refused to do his bidding and turned his back on him to walk away. When the Prophet caught him he feared he was going to give him a shaking, but the Prophet only asked him smilingly: "Would you really not do it?" He spent his entire life in voluntary poverty. He took pride in his simplicity. "Poverty is my pride," he said, but he prayed to God against compulsory want which makes right thinking and virtuous conduct extremely difficult. About this paralysing poverty he said: "It blackens a man's face in this world and the next, and brings him very near to losing his faith." As the poet Sa'dī says, it is difficult for an indigent man to concentrate on his prayers; while attempting a communion

with God his consciousness is switched away to the worrying thought whether his children shall get any bread tomorrow. The Prophet never advised people to court poverty: "Let them earn as much as they can with honest labour, but if they are genuinely religious they shall not squander it in extravagance and luxury, but fulfilling their simple needs they will spend the surplus to relieve need and suffering and for general common weal. This attitude towards wealth is beautifully summarised in two couplets in the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī. He says, the goods of life are a blessing if they are rightly acquired and justly used; the boat of life requires some water under it to keep it afloat, but let not the love of goods enter your soul because water which keeps the boat afloat so long as it is under it sinks the boat when it enters it.

The Prophet warned the Muslims that they should let humility be divorced from self-respect. The religions that sanctioned monkery allowed the monks to beg their food; every day they went out to ask for charity with sacks and begging bowls. Islam prohibits both priesthood and monkery because priestly caste or class also becomes such a parasitical and exploiting class. In India Brahmans became such a class living a comfortable life posing as intermediaries between gods and their credulous worshippers. In the West also the Church in medieval ages became richer than all the feudal lords taken together. The popes lived in greater pomp than the kings and all the treasures of art formed their way into the Vatican. The archbishops and the bishops lived in palaces, thus misrepresenting Jesus who lived a poor life. In ancient Rome and Greece and in India gold and silver were stored in large quantities in temples. Religion had become predatory and parasitical everywhere. Islam has abolished priesthood as a class and the Church as an institution, and inaugurated the priesthood of all believers. It wants only self-respecting citizens who earn their own livelihood and require no.

intermediaries between themselves and their Creator. According to Islam, a man who spends his life only in meditations and prayers and sacraments is not a self-respecting man because he expects to be supported by the labour of others. How could anyone professing and pretending to be a commissioned intermediary between God and man be genuinely a humble man? His pretensions create in him a false pride raising him aloft on a pedestal. A self-respecting man should behave in every respect with dignity born of independence. He should avoid living on the labour of others. He should live in simplicity and practise humility without degrading himself in his own eyes or before others. Ascetic saints used to take pride in personal dirt and filth and some of them called the lice infesting them the pearls of God. Islam enjoins personal cleanliness as an essential ingredient of godliness. One of the earliest Divine commands addressed to the Prophet was to keep his clothes clean and avoid all dirt. No one in Islam is allowed to stand for prayers if his body and clothes are not clean. Dirty and tattered clothes and smelling body are not the signs of humility. Once man asked the Prophet that he liked good clothes and shoes; is this pride that prevents one's entry into Paradise? The Prophet replied: "No, this is not pride; this is love of beauty. God is Himself beautiful and loves beauty; the pride that is vicious lies in the denial of truth and in despising others" (Tirmidhī, "Abwāb-ul-Bir). The Prophet once saw a man with wild uncombed hair and asked if he could afford a comb. When he saw a man with dirty clothes he asked if he could not get water for washing. Once a man came to him clad in dirty and tattered clothes. The Prophet asked him if he was a man of means. He replied that he had good many camels and horses and goats and a number of slaves. The Prophet said: "God's bounty should be manifested in your exterior also."

Islam has inculcated the observance of golden mean between two extremes. As we have seen in these in-

stances Islam deprecated shabbiness but laid emphasis on simplicity and cleanliness. It prohibited for men the use of silk and banned the use of gold and silver in utensils and furniture. Many people who have no intrinsic merit attempt to acquire social prestige by wearing expensive and distinctive dress and by what a modern sociologist, Veblen, has called conspicuous consumption. It is this conspicuous consumption which generates false pride and prestige in the consumer and the vice of envy in those who cannot afford it. Class-war in Western societies and the attraction of Communism are the products of luxury and extravagance on the one side and lack of necessities on the other. People ought to be trained to seek honour and respect by embodying intrinsic values in their lives and not by luxurious houses and furniture and expensive apparel. Real prestige should rest in mental and moral superiority.

When 'Umar went to Jerusalem to take possession of the town from its Roman governor, he travelled all the way from Medina with one servant and one camel between the two to ride by turns. When he reached the city the servant was riding the camel because the just 'Umar would not deprive him of his turn. The Muslims who came to receive the head of the great republic thought it derogatory for such a dignitary to enter a city clad in a coarse shirt, holding the rein of a camel ridden by a slave. Abū 'Ubaidah ventured to suggest to him that he should not enter the city like that. What would the people think of such a poor commander of the Faithful? 'Umar was so annoyed at the suggestion that he rebuked Abū 'Ubaidah, saying that if another man had made such a stupid suggestion he would have punished him. It was when 'Umar was crossing a shallow rivulet, taking off his leather stockings and dangling them on his shoulders holding the rein of the camel. 'Umar said to 'Ubaidah: "You have a very false and un-Islamic conception of prestige; don't you realise that we were a despised nation and God exalted

us by Islam; if we seek prestige through anything other than Islam God will degrade us again (Hakam, *Mus-tadrik*, Vol. I).

In every society some people are bound to be poor and needy. 'Umar says that even in such dire want self-respecting people do not humiliate themselves by stretching their hands for charity. They find it difficult to get any employment and do not know where to go in search of it. If they are self-respecting they try to keep up an appearance of respectability. As they desist from asking assistance, people take them to be rich and free of want. They refuse to become unfortunate beggars, but looking closely you could recognise their want from their visage (ii. 7). Such are the people whom you should seek to assist and not those who humiliate themselves by begging.

(Alms are) for the poor who are confined in the way of Allah (ii. 273).

HOW ISLAM REVOLUTIONISED ARABIAN SOCIETY

THE extent of the Islamic reformation and revolution can be appreciated fully only if we look at the picture of Arabian beliefs and mores before the advent of Islam. Let us start with their religious beliefs. Some territories adjacent to the mainland of Arabia had experienced the impact of Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Some tribes of Yemen that had emigrated from that country after a very devastating flood had settled in Hīrah in the second century of the Christian era, the city of Kūfah being situated in the same region. There they established a kingdom. They came under the political domination and religious influence of the powerful Persian Empire. Another emigrant tribe of Yemen settled in Syria. This Ghassānid tribe ruled here for a considerable period. Coming under the influence of the Romans they became Christians and continued in that faith till the advent of Islam. But these influences did not penetrate into the generality of the Arabian Peninsula. Some Jewish tribes that had settled in Arabia had a firmer hold. They added to their numbers by conversion and enjoyed great prestige because of their economic and cultural superiority. Wādī-ul-Qurā', Khaibar and Medina had large Jewish populations. They had made themselves militarily strong and built a chain of forts. They enjoyed their strength and security and took pride in their religion and culture. But either their proselytising zeal was lukewarm or Arabian tribal resistance was so adamantine that they had no extensive success in converting the country to their faith.

Pagan polytheism remained in the main unaffected by the Jewish faith. The major part of Arabia continued in its immemorial worship of gods and idols, trees and stars, angels and jinn.

But due either to the theistic influences in their surroundings and to some extent in their midst or to that kind of polytheistic evolution that we find in India, Greece and Rome, the belief in one universal God was found side by side with belief in lesser gods. But as has happened in other polytheistic religions this Supreme Being, whom they theoretically held to be the creator of the universe, was too remote to be of any practical use. The lesser gods and idols were more accessible; therefore they could be invoked in times of need. They could also be used as intermediaries for intercession to win the favour of the Invisible God. The concept of one Supreme God seems to be sufficiently old in Arabia. Some tablets of very ancient times have been discovered which have, inscribed on them; the word "Allah" though it is written as Hallah; and 'Abdullāhi, the servant of Allah, was an old Nabataean name. The name of the Prophet's father was also 'Abdullah. The Qur'ān has also pointed to this belief of the pagan Arabs in more than one verse: "If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: Allah" (xxxi. 25). It is quite possible that this may have been a legacy of the monotheism of Abraham when he resided for a while in Arabia and laid the foundation of the Ka'bah, to which the Arabic tradition and the Qur'ān bore testimony. But the real value of theism lies not in a belief in the oneness of God but in the attributes of that God and His relation to man and the rest of creation. No sentiment of devotion was evoked by this belief among the Arabs. They had a very concrete and practical mind like the Romans who used their gods for common utilitarian ends; for them the idols near at hand were deemed to be more useful—they could avert misfortune and bestow favours on their devotees. The Qur'ān has de-

scribed in a verse this difference of sentiment and attitude.

When you mention simply the name of God, those who do not believe in the life hereafter frown at it; but if you talk of others (gods and idols), then they feel so pleased (xxxix. 45).

This verse incidentally also mentions the fact that though they had a kind of feeble belief in God, they did not believe in life after death. There are many verses in the Qur'an about the disbelief of the Arabian pagans in survival after death. In another verse it is said that they believed that it is only the processes of time and physical Nature which create life and then destroy it—a belief shared by all types of naturalistic materialism. "And they say: There is nothing but our life in this world; we live and die and nothing destroys us but time" (xlv. 24). The Jews of the Old Testament, even when they had developed the belief in Jahwe as one and only Supreme God, did not derive belief in the survival of the individual ego as a necessary corollary of belief in God. The earlier books of the Old Testament think in terms of national destiny only. The Qur'an does not use any word which could be taken as an exact equivalent of polytheism; the Qur'anic term is *Shirk* which means "associating" other gods or beings with Allah, the sole Creator and the only proper object of worship. *Shirk* does not mean a categorical denial of the One Supreme Being. The pagans tried to rationalise their worship of lesser gods by the assertion that they will help them to bring them nearer to God. Even to this day the idol-worshippers of India put forward the same plea, and so do the saint-worshippers of Christianity and Islam who believe in helpful intermediaries.

We do not serve them save that they may make us nearer to Allah (xxxix. 3).

They also believed that the great God also begets children, to contradict which the Qur'an said: "God

begets not, nor is He begotten" (cxii. 3). As there were female deities in other polytheistic creeds, the Arabs believed that the angels were the daughters of God and worshipped them as female deities. Along with the polytheistic Arabs the Qur'an rebukes also the worshippers of prophets, deified by some creeds or considered as God-Incarnates.

And neither would he enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for gods (iii. 79).

These misguided people have apportioned the invisible divinity of God among His creatures. Besides the angels, believed to be beneficent and helpful agencies who could offer direct assistance or intercede with God, they also believed that the invisible beings they called jinn, who could do evil as well as good, need to be propitiated and worshipped. Islam did not deny the reality of invisible beings living in other dimensions of time and space and not subject to the categories of physical existence as we understand it; creation is not confined to the objects of our sense-data. Whatever be their nature, there is ample empirical evidence of such beings. But Islam taught that no creature in the heavens and the earth, whether it be an angel or a demon, embodied or disembodied spirit, ought to be feared, propitiated and worshipped. The Qur'an says that these pagans have conceived a relation between God and these beings and made them the associates of God in control of life and the world.

And they assert a relationship between Him and the jinn (xxxvii. 158).

And they make the jinn associates with Allah, while He created them (vi. 101).

Fear of these beings made the pagans worship them and offer them animal sacrifices. The worship of idols was very widespread. If there was no idol near at hand they would hold some stones sacred and worship them. Sometimes they erected a mound of

clay and milked a goat over it which was believed to sanctify it as an object of worship. Worshippers of the sun and the moon and the stars were also found in some tribes of Arabia. In Yemen the community of *Sabā'* worshipped the sun, and a king of Yemen had built a temple dedicated to sun-worship. In star-worship different tribes had chosen different stars as specially powerful deities. The invisible spirits and ghosts and jinn were male as well as female. They could assume human forms whenever they chose. They would come and sit with the Beduins round a fire in the cold night of the desert; they sang and related stories. Sometimes a female jinn would consent to marry an Arab chief and have children by him. 'Umar ibn Yarbū' married a jinn female of the name of *Sclat* and had children by her. *Bilqīs*, the queen of Yemen, was believed to be a daughter of *Solat*. The Arabs were so sure of their reality and their different traits that they had classified them into different species and given them different names. Those who mixed with human beings were called *A'mir*, those who teased children were called *Rūh*, the more mischievous were Satans and the most dangerous were *'Ifrit*. *Tālib*, a brother of 'Alī, was believed to have been taken away by a jinn because he vanished without a trace. A king of Arabia was also believed to have been abducted by a jinn but was returned after many years. With such beliefs the Arabs had always and everywhere to be on guard and the necessity to be on the right side of these beings was very great. Islam delivered the believers from these imaginary terrors planting it firmly on the mind of every believer that all power lies with God and immense powers are delegated by God to man, his representative and ruler on this earth.

I am going to place in the earth My Khalīfah (vicegerent).
(ii. 30).

And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon
(xi. 38).

You shall have the upper hand if you are believers (iii. 138).

Belief in oracles was even more widespread in Arabia than in Greece. In Greece there were only one or two gods who inspired a few oracles in a few temples but in Arabia they were everywhere. It was believed that every oracle had a jinn associated with him who informed him of distant and future events; prognostication had become a well-established profession. People resorted to these *Kāhins* for divination and fortune-telling. They had adopted a distinctive appearance so that they could be easily recognised. In their oracular utterances they often used rhymes or rhythmic sentences. As rhythm is found also in many verses of the Qur'ān, the pagans took the Prophet also as a *Kāhin*. Their influence in the Arabian society was very great. People brought to them their disputes for decision and the verdict of the oracle had to be accepted. A *Kāhin* lived in a temple and was dedicated as a priest to a particular idol. There were men as well as women among them. When they were about to answer a question or ready to prophesy, they put themselves in an appropriate psychical condition to act as a medium for their genius. They advised superstitious ways of averting misfortunes and charged heavy fees for their prescriptions. These fees and gifts were technically called *Halwān-ul-Kāhin*, sweets for the oracle. One of the most beneficent of Islamic reforms was the banning of oracles, delivering the people from the clutches of deep-rooted and widespread superstition. The poets were also supposed to have an inspiring genius with them who dictated verses. Like the deities these inspiring geniuses were of both sexes and were of different grades of power and dignity. Sometimes a poet would assert with pride that his genius was masculine over against another poet whose genius was feminine.

Superstition appears to be an ineradicable trait of human nature and in this respect there is little to

choose between advanced and primitive cultures. When we say that the pre-Islamic Arabs were highly superstitious, this does not prove them to be more irrational than others who take pride in their rational and scientific civilisation. In the numbering of houses no one allows his house to be numbered thirteen and even in a dinner of free-thinking rationalists thirteen shall never sit at the table because of the vague fear that one of them may die soon after. While talking of one's good fortune one must touch wood to avoid its reversal. Spilling of salt and walking under a ladder and hundreds of superstitions like these still govern the conduct of people of advanced culture and rationalistic education. In the life and conduct of the Prophet of Islam you find no trace of any superstition. When his infant son died it happened to coincide with an eclipse of the sun. His devotees, still not quite free from ancient superstitions, ascribed the eclipse to the death of the Prophet's son. Thereupon the Prophet told them that astronomical happenings are unrelated to the fate of human beings. With this simple utterance he swept away at one stroke all astrological abracadabra.

We enumerate here a few of the superstitions from which Islam delivered the Arabs.

The Arabs did not kill snakes. They did not consider the snakes to be sacred, like the Hindus, but they abstained from killing them because of the superstitious fear that the mate of the killed snake was bound to find out the murderer and kill him in vengeance. They were great believers in augury. If a bird flew to their right when about to start some work they considered it an omen of good luck, but if it flew to their left it presaged bad luck. A she-camel after ten deliveries was let loose as sacrosanct. If the number of camels in the possession of one person reached a thousand, they deprived the thousandth camel of one eye to escape evil eye. During the time of famine they would tie a sheaf of hay to the tail of a

sheep or a lamb setting fire to it in the hope that with this sympathetic magic the smoke will invite rain clouds. While going on a journey an Arab would tie a string with a knot on the branch of a tree. On coming back if he found that the knot had been undone he concluded that his wife had been unfaithful in his absence. While journeying through trackless desert if they felt they had lost the way they would wear their clothes inside out with the hope that they will thus find the right track. They were sure that whoever uses blasphemous language against the two chief idols *Lāt* and *'Uzzā* incurs leprosy. Whoever followed the rational Prophet was at once freed of all such nonsense. Islam retained the minimum of rituals and ceremonies but depleted them of all superstition. With respect to animal sacrifices the Qur'ān said that it is not their flesh and blood but the spirit of sacrifice and piety that is spiritually beneficial and reaches God.

We have given a brief sketch of the beliefs, practices and superstitions of pre-Islamic Arabia to give an idea of how this fuel was burnt away to ashes by the rationalistic flames of Islam. If Islamic reformation had done nothing more, only this would have been a marvellous cultural achievement. But the primary purpose of all true religion is the moral transformation of man. Now let us glance at the moral condition of Arabia so that with that background we may be able to appreciate Islam's achievement in extirpating vice in its various shapes and diverting the wild energies of an unruly race to constructive channels which put this reformed race not only on the cultural map of human history but made it a pioneer in all phases of culture.

Arabian history before Islam was nothing but a sorry tale of perpetual tribal feuds. Historians have enumerated bloody feuds during the half century before the advent of Islam, but even in this short period they run into hundreds. The tribes were so murderous that even on the slightest pretext swords were drawn and hundreds were killed, but the fire of

revenge was not extinguished for many decades. The Arabs were fond of horse racing and they were as proud of their studs as they were of their individual and tribal valour. 'Abas and Dhubyān, two tribes, ran their horses Wahis and Ghabra in a race. One party thought the race had not been run according to rules and there had been foul play. Tempers flared up and swords were drawn. This small event initiated an endless chain of murders and revenge and bloody battles were fought for full forty years. Another big bloody battle was caused when a camel belonging to a tribe strayed into the pasture of another tribe and it was wounded. Qulaib who had shot the arrow and wounded the camel was killed and this murder flared up the tribes of Bakr and Taghlib in which hundreds were killed on both sides. Aus and Khazraj, the two tribes of Medina, massacred each other to such an extent in the battle called Yaum-i-Bu'āth that most of the chiefs of both tribes were killed. This feud was ended only when both the tribes swore allegiance to the Prophet when he settled in Medina. The chief occupation of the Arabs was vendetta which sanctioned every cruelty. It is to this phase of Arabian tribal hostilities that the Qur'ān has referred asking them to be thankful to God and Islam which knitted them into a fraternal organic whole converting their mutual hatred into a sentiment of fraternity. Islam, whose essential mission was to establish peace between the warring groups of humanity, showed its strength and the possibility of success in transforming the psychology of groups whom neither any imperial power nor any religion or ethics had succeeded in uniting under an ideal that could make them rise above their ferocious tribalism. Their aggressiveness and spiritedness were channelled into fighting the evil of social, political and religious system that stood in the way of universal peace. Their energies were employed to overthrow the old corrupt world which sanctioned domination of group over group and class over class and encouraged

inter-group persecution.

Another bad trait of the Arabs was their drunkenness. Their condition in this respect was much worse than what one finds in the alcohol-loving West. Every well-to-do house was a tavern. In a gathering of friends and on all festive occasions people took pride in becoming tipsy. It has been the case in all societies that gambling gets associated with drunkenness; perhaps psychologically recklessness issues in the unholy alliance of these two evils. Much more than money, camels were the currency of Arabia. When the drunkards gambled, the winner of camels would slaughter them for a general feast to exhibit generosity. Sometimes under the influence of alcohol the host became extravagantly hospitable and, in order to be praised as a host, slaughtered all his camels; when the company enjoyed roasted meat and innumerable cups of wine they sang his praises and the drunken dancing girls entertained them throwing all shame and modesty to the winds. The poets improvised pornographic verses in praise of these vendors of sexual charms. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry is replete with such stuff. Similar conditions prevail in many Western countries today but they cannot find any way of eradicating this evil. The reformers of the United States made a heroic and praiseworthy attempt to enforce prohibition by law and police action but failed ignominiously because the national conscience could not be sufficiently convinced; the whole attempt ended in a tragic failure.

Weaning a drunkard from his urge for drink is one of the most difficult of moral reforms. It would have looked almost impossible to transform wine-bibbing Arabia into a sober nation. But Islam and the force of Muhammad's personality made many impossible things possible. Eradicating immemorial polytheism and idolatry from Arabia and knitting the eternally hostile tribes into one fraternity could have appeared as impossible to a historian of Arabia as

eradicating the evil of drunkenness. But this too was achieved, though to uproot such a deep-rooted evil some gradualness was used. At first the Prophet advised people to abstain from wine but as there was no peremptory order people had to judge themselves about the degree of abstention; they wanted a further clarification which was offered in the following verse:

(O Prophet) they ask you about alcohol and gambling. Tell them that there is great evil in them; although people derive from them some benefits also, their evil outweighs their benefits (ii. 219).

Even this weighing of pros and cons was taken by some to allow them some discretion; it was a rational calculus of profit and loss but not an order of total prohibition. Even great Muslims continued to drink after that. Then came an occasion which proved that drunkenness and prayers cannot go together and whatever vitiates prayers saps the very foundations of Islam. An *Ansārī* had invited 'Alī and 'Abdur Rahmān ibn 'Auf to dinner and when they had gulped a few cups of wine, the time for evening prayers arrived. One of them stood up to lead the prayers but under the influence of wine got confused in reciting the verses. This led to the first step in prohibition. The verse revealed ordered the Muslims not to offer prayers in the condition of intoxication which prevents them from understanding what they are saying:

Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say (iv. 43).

After this order, no tipsy person was allowed to join the prayers. As they had to come for congregational prayers five times during the day and the night, only little intervals were left for them to indulge in drinking, but some of them did avail of this loophole. It required another occasion to demonstrate further the evil of drinking before the final order of prohibition in uncompromising terms was issued. Some *Ansār* invited

friends to a dinner where Sa'ād bin Abī Waqqās was the chief guest. Under the influence of wine Sa'ād became boastful and asserted that the Emigrants were superior to the Helpers. At this tempers flared up and it came to fisticuffs. The Muslims were now convinced that intoxication removes all healthy inhibitions and sows dissension even among friends. It was after this that wine was totally prohibited and gambling was included in the prohibitory injunctions as a diabolical habit.

O you who believe ! intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (divining by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the Devil's work; shun it, therefore, that you may be successful (v. 90).

It is reported by 'Anas that when this verse was revealed eleven prominent Muslims were feasting in the house of Abū Ṭalhah and indulging in alcohol. The moment this order reached their ears, they unhesitatingly smashed their goblets and cups. This occurred in numerous houses in Medina. Casks and bottles were smashed and emptied into the drains in such large numbers that the streets overflowed with wine. Compare this spectacle with the flouting of orders of prohibition enforced by a secular government with no spiritual prestige and power, driving the whole vicious industry underground with bootlegging and speak-easies, substituting one corruption for another and on making the remedy worse than the disease.

Gambling is another great evil which has been rampant in some ancient civilisations, and advances in civilisation have not succeeded in checking it. The extent of the evil of gambling in ancient culture can be visualised by the story of five Pandawa brothers in Bharat gambling away their common wife Darupdi when they had lost everything else. Even today among a class of Hindus, Divali is an annual festival of gambling. Along with drinking, gambling has been the favourite pastime of aristocracies and feudal lords in the West; even a man like Tolstoy before his con-

version used to gamble hard among fellow military officers and aristocrats. Modern legislation seems to ignore it altogether because it is impossible to subject it to police supervision. Monte Carlo flourishes on it and Las Vegas is a favourite resort of American gamblers. The extent of this evil in pre-Islamic Arabia appears to be even worse than this. Although this evil cannot be checked in Western countries, yet no one dare pronounce it as a virtue. In Arabia it was commended as one of the essentials of gentlemanliness and nobility. One of the noble traits of the Arabs was hospitality and generosity, but as they had continued this with drinking orgies, they tacked it on to gambling also. They would pool together the meat of slaughtered camels and then divide it into ten portions. Then they would take ten arrows which had different names and every arrow meant so much portion of meat in greater or lesser quantity. These arrows were put in a sack and jumbled together. After this a reliable person was appointed to draw the lots. Some arrows in the sack meant nil and in whosoever's name this blank was drawn received no portion and the collected portions of these blanks were then distributed in charity. Thus the noble virtue of charity became associated with the vice of gambling as drunkenness was associated with it. When the Qur'an said that drinking and gambling carry some benefits also with them, it was referring to this custom. As charity and hospitality were acknowledged and practised as great virtues, people who took no part in drinking orgies and gambling were considered to be mean misers. By association with a virtue the vices had become exalted. They had coined a term for such "mean misers": they called them *Barm*. Respectable people would refuse to marry their daughters to these *Barms*. A pre-Islamic poet asks his wife that if he is killed and she desires taking another husband, she must not choose a mean person who has never joined a gambling party. There was a good deal of betting on future

happenings. Before Islam prohibited it, Abū Bakr, on the basis of a Qur'ānic prophecy, bet against a pagan that the Romans shall retrieve their defeat by the Persians within six years. As the Romans were not victorious within that period, he lost the bet. If the period had been nine years he would have won it. Like the ancient Hindus, they did not hesitate to stake even their women and children in a desperate gamble when they had lost everything else. This recklessness occurred very often when a man had lost his senses and reason by intoxication. The Forty Years' War between 'Abas and Dhubyān was the result of heavy betting on horses.

Another cruel institution among the Arabs was heartless usury. The pagan Arabs as well as the Jews indulged in it. Some eminent persons who became the pillars of Islam after their conversion were usurious money-lenders. 'Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet, 'Uthmān, the third successor of the Prophet, and Khālid b. Walīd, the "Sword of Allah," were money-lenders. When usury was prohibited by Islam, they were asked to demand back only the principal without any interest that may have accrued.

O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and relinquish what remains (due) from usury, if you are believers (ii. 278).

Tā'if was a very wealthy city and its prosperous citizens increased their wealth by usury. When they entered into a peace treaty with the Prophet, one of the terms was that they shall desist from this vile practice. This was also the condition of peace with the Najrānī merchants of Yemen. The hot indignation of the Qur'ān against usury, making it an act of high treason and equivalent to waging war against God and His Prophet, can be appreciated if we look at the conditions that were attached to money-lending, the highest of which was that if a debtor could not pay within the stipulated period, the rate of interest was enhanced.

with geometrical progression and during the course of a few years the entire assets of the debtor, his movable and immovable goods, were confiscated in discharge of the debt. Most of the debtors were the needy poor peasants and workers who got entrapped and enslaved by this cruel exploitation. Among the exploiting class the Jews were the foremost because they were a wealthy community and thought it religiously permissible to fleece the pagans. Slavery also became a consequence of usury. When the debtor took a loan on a mortgage and was unable to return the loan within a specified period, the mortgaged article became the property of the money-lender. The worst part of the system was that sometimes women and children were also mortgaged and, if the debtor was unable to pay the mounting debt, became the property of the usurer.

Besides this economic blood-sucking, theft and dacoity were also very common and, as every tribe was a predatory tribe, their mores and ethos did not deprecate it, if it was practised against strangers or other tribes. Every tribe was ever ready to lift the cattle as well as the women and children of other tribes. Trading caravans could not pass through the domain of a tribe without heavily bribing it. The women and children captured in a raid were often sold in slavery while the cattle were kept by the raiders. As these raids occurred often in the early hours of the morning when before dawn the weary travellers slumbered for a little rest, the word *subh* (morning) acquired the meaning of loot as *sabih* was the man who stole or raided in the morning. If the people had indulged in this all the twelve months in the year there would have been no respite and as the dacoits wanted to feel secure and safe against each other at least for a short period they had agreed that the three months of pilgrimage should be held as sacred months in which loot, murder and feuds should stop. But even the sanctity of these

three months was not always respected; when it did not suit them they would shift these three months of amnesty and substitute them for other months. Some tribes were notorious for theft and dacoity. The tribe of *Ta'i* which has become famous in literature because of the legendary charitableness of *Hātim* enjoyed this unenviable reputation. *Hātim*'s charity seems to have been an over-compensation for the guilt of the tribe of which he was the chief. *Hātim* was a Christian and in all probability the whole tribe was Christian, but Christianity had made no difference in the morality of the tribe. *Hātim* alone appears to be an honourable exception. He enjoyed such a reputation in Arabia that when his daughter was captured in a battle and brought before the Prophet as a war prisoner, the Prophet, learning that she was *Hātim*'s daughter, spread his mantle on the ground and made her sit there honourably. When the Muslims were astonished at this exceptional treatment of a war prisoner the Prophet said to them: "Don't you know the noble character of her father?" When the Prophet said that she was free, a true daughter of her father as she was, she refused to accept freedom unless others of her tribe were also set at liberty.

Dacoits expected to be praised for their bravery and sang of their exploits; the poets composed eulogies for them. But even sneaking thieves were not ashamed of their doings. *Ta'abbata Sharran* has become a classical figure in this respect. In the collection of *Hamāsah* you find his couplets depicting himself as a skilful and cunning thief. There were eminent people among the Quraish who were accused of stealing even from the valuable store of the Ka'bah offerings. A number of them combined to steal a deer of gold from the Ka'bah. Thieving was so common among all classes that, among other things, the pledge of conversion required by the Prophet from men as well as women included the solemn promise that they shall not steal.

Some scholars, dominated by the economic view of history, are of view that morals and creeds are the products of economic situations and vary concomitantly with economic changes. They would say that predatory tribes, among whom theft and loot and raids are considered virtues, generally live in economic conditions of extreme scarcity. If there are no normal channels of production and distribution of goods, they will not hesitate to get what they want by deceit, theft or violence; morality is the product of a moderate sufficiency of means. In conditions of economic insecurity and chaos it is difficult to hold people back from coveting and snatching whatever they can, particularly when there is no strong government to check them. This was the condition of a large part of beduin and tribal Arabia which had lasted for millenniums. Under such conditions sermons on peace, on love for the neighbour and on immunity for the stranger become ineffective. Such people may be put down for a while by a strong moral force which emerged with Islam and the personality of Muhammad, but the moment that controlling force is weakened and the fabric of government becomes loose, the old instincts and urges come to the surface again. The chief reason for the revolt of the Arabian tribes immediately after the death of the Prophet was economic. The tribes had never dreamt of paying taxes to anybody; on the other hand, they were in the habit of receiving irregular taxes or bribes from trading caravans that passed by them. Islam had stopped their robberies which they thought had reduced their means of livelihood and now the Islamic Central State centred in Medina levied *Zakāt* on them, mostly a capital levy on their cattle or a little gold or silver which they may have acquired by barter, bribes or loot. The *Zakāt* levy was very moderate and reasonable, but this was the straw that broke the camel's back. They said they had become Muslims, repudiated their gods and idols and agreed to follow other moral and religious injunctions,

but they were not prepared to be taxed. Even the stern 'Umar hesitated to wage war against them to stop this no-tax campaign because the Prophet had prohibited the Muslims to draw swords against fellow Muslims, and these dissidents professed to be Muslims. It was the genius of Abū Bakr which realised the gravity of the situation because without Zakāt, which was the only tax for the simple initial needs of the incipient Muslim State, the State would have disintegrated leaving the independent Arabian tribes to shift for themselves, acknowledging no overall central authority. How could a State run without taxes and without any central organisation? Islam was saved by the faith and valour of a minority of its defenders in Medina against overwhelming hordes bent on a counter-revolution; but unless there could come about a change in the economic condition of the tribes, the eternally hungry tribes could not be trusted to keep the peace for long. The change in the economic situation came with the territorial expansion of Islam by the overthrow of the powerful Persian and Roman Empires on the right and left of Arabia bringing the Fertile Crescent within the domain of Islam along with Persia and Egypt. Large-scale recruitment of the beduins in the army and the chances of settling in prosperous and fertile lands solved the economic problem to a great extent. To create still further economic security 'Umar prepared a register of the entire Muslim population granting stipends to individuals and families sufficient to ward off starvation and fulfil very fundamental needs. This was the first experiment in history to lay the foundations of a Socialist Welfare State which considered itself bound to look after the elementary needs of its citizens out of State revenues. But with the emergence of absolute monarchies later on the experiment could not be developed any further or even maintained. Later in history the Arabian tribes reverted to their old habits and became predatory again. Even under the nominal Ottoman sovereignty

over Arabia, right down to the strong hand of Sultān Ibn Sa‘ūd, the caravans of the pilgrims were looted. Even Ibn Sa‘ūd may not have succeeded in establishing law and order if economic betterment had not come from other quarters—the undreamt-of oil wealth of Arabia. This shows that religious teaching alone and moral sermonising by itself cannot hope to succeed if the means of livelihood are scarce and insecure. Man does not live by bread alone, but he cannot live without bread. Therefore, even the followers of property-hating Jesus pray for daily bread.

The struggle for existence which was severe in the geographical conditions of the beduin tribes had made them cruel and callous. They lived in a perpetual condition of war with their physical and human environment, and war necessarily generates and encourages cruelty. The sentiment of respect for life was non-existent. To lose one's own life or take the life of another did not require a moment's hesitation. They took pleasure not only in killing but also in torture and mutilation of men and animals. Tying of enemies with poles and trees and making them targets of arrows was an enjoyable pastime. In their feasting they severed the humps of living camels or the fatty backs of rams for roasting; this was one of their sumptuous dishes. Or for sheer sport they would practise archery on animals tied to poles. In the frenzy of war they had no scruples in bayoneting the abdomens of pregnant women; but women themselves were not less cruel. They rejoiced in cutting the ears and noses of fallen enemies in the battlefield and string them into garlands to wear in triumph. They vowed to make cups of the skulls of enemies and drink wine in them after victory. The wife of Abū Sufyān was a symbol of the diabolical cruelty of women when she ripped open the abdomen of Ḥamzah, drew out his liver and chewed it. Another cruel method of dealing with the enemy was tying his limbs to branches of adjacent trees pulled together and then letting go the branches, thus

tearing his limbs apart. They tied women with the tails of horses which were made to gallop, thus tearing them to bits. The least cruel method they used in punishing an enemy was to shut him up in a closet and starve him to death ; they called this method *sabr* which in common language denotes the virtue of patience and perseverance. Sometimes they tied a camel on the grave of a person and starved it to death to serve as the dead person's transport. Such a camel was called *Balīyyah*.

The list of the vices of the pre-Islamic Arabs would not be complete without mentioning their attitude towards sexual relations. Adultery, fornication and prostitution were not only condoned but proudly eulogised by their great poets. *Imrā'-u'l-Qais*, the classical Arab poet of the *Jāhiliyyah*, about whom the Prophet passed the verdict that he was a poet of poets and would lead them to Hell, composed a *qasīdah* depicting pornographic details of his sexual adventures with his cousin *Anizah* which was sung even by children. *Ibn 'Abbās* has related (*Sahīh Bukhārī*, 'Kitāb-un-Nikāh,' Vol. II) that pre-Islamic Arabs hesitated to practise fornication openly but did not condemn it if it was practised surreptitiously. Prostitution was practised as a profession ; houses of the prostitutes were marked by flags fixed before their doors, and, therefore, they were called "women of flags". Such women in the West put up red lights on their doors and their quarter is called a red-light area. In this respect civilisation does not seem to have advanced a bit except in the wrong direction. There were houses of prostitution in Mecca itself before Islam and some of the prostitutes enjoyed a high social status. After Islam *Marsad Ghanavī* asked the permission of the Prophet to marry one of them, known as 'Unaq. It was in reply to this request that the verse was revealed that a pious Muslim who has not been an adulterer himself should not marry such hardened sinners. Such women, if they are desirous of marrying, should take

husbands who have had a similar past or they should choose an idolater who does not accept the Islamic code of morality.

The fornicator shall not marry any but a fornicatress or idolatress (xxiv. 3).

Even when a respectable man like 'Abdullah ibn'Ubayy whom the Medinites, before the arrival of the Prophet, had resolved to crown as king compelled his slave-girls to earn money for him by letting their bodies to others. No one considered this to be despicable. The practice must have been common and a verse of the Qur'an had to put a stop to it: "Compel not your slave-girls to prostitution" (xxiv. 33). They also had a eugenic idea that some great qualities are inherited. As they valued bravery more than morality, sometimes they would allow their wives to cohabit with a brave man to get a brave son. Sometimes they practised collective fornication. A group of men whose number should not exceed ten would cohabit with the same woman. If she became pregnant and gave birth to a child she would send for the whole group and pick up any one of them as the father of the child, and he had to accept the child and bring him up as his own. Even in this immoral society the determination of fatherhood for a child was considered necessary for purposes of maintenance; so even when a prostitute gave birth to a child she would send for a professional physiognomist skilful in the art of *qiyāfah* (feature study) and consulted him as to which one out of her many clients did the child resemble most, and the supposed father had to accept the verdict. (All these modes are mentioned in detail in *Sahīh Bukhārī*, "Kitāb-un-Nikāh".) Marriage for a temporary stipulated term was also allowed. In the beginning Islam did not prohibit it but later on it was strictly banned. Another abhorrent custom was to inherit step-mothers as chattels and make them wives of the heir.

Chastity is bound up with modesty in dress so as

not to make a person sexually exciting. The pre-Islamic Arabs had no scruples about nakedness. Even in sacred functions like the pilgrimage men and women circumambulated the Ka'bah stark naked. They were absolutely devoid of any feeling of modesty or desire of privacy in this respect. Men bathed together absolutely naked, nor did they feel the necessity of screening themselves from each other while answering the call of nature.

Women fared the worst in the pre-Islamic Arabian society. In their perpetual strife the Arabs wanted fighters only, strong enough to protect themselves and kill others. Women in such a society are considered a liability. In wartime they were captured and violated right on the field of battle. It is only women who beget, so they considered it a necessary evil that some of them had to be kept alive. But the Arabs would rather not have any. They felt sad at the birth of a daughter and harboured the idea of strangling their female babies or bury them alive even when they were quite grown up.

The pre-Islamic Arab logic was that he who could not fight could not inherit, because property was connected with offensive and defensive fight. On the basis of this logic, infants and small children also were deprived of inheritance. Islam falsified this logic, although some professedly civilised societies continue to be governed by this logic, not prescribing any share in inheritance for women, adding further to this injustice by making a woman's property vest in the name of the husband at the time of wedding.

In Arabia there was no limit placed on the number of wives one may marry. According to the Mosaic law and many other religious and customary codes, a man could have as many wives as he pleased and treat them as he pleased. Islam placed a limit on polygamy and made the conditions so hard that a just man could incur this responsibility with the utmost hesitation. Under Islam a man who cannot dispense absolute jus-

tice between more than one wife and more than one family is ordained to remain monogamous, and men are warned that they shall find it extremely hard to do justice in this respect. The Arabs used to divorce women at will and keep them suspended, neither retaining and maintaining them nor allowing them to marry others. Islam disapproved of divorce, but when it became inevitable, regulated it with rationality and justice.

Before Islam women were treated with cruelty in many other ways. During the menstrual period they were considered polluted and segregated completely; they had to eat and drink separately. To the widows they were very cruel, only less so than the Hindus who either burnt them or kept them alive for life-long persecution. A widow among the Arabs was shut up in a small closet clothed in dirty rags. She was immured like this for a whole year. At the termination of this solitary imprisonment, a goat or a donkey was pushed into her closet. When she had rubbed her body and her private parts against the animal she was allowed to come out with the excreta of the animal in her hand, which, when she threw it away, brought her out of mourning. A further method of depriving woman of all economic rights was to deprive her of her bride-price or *Mihr*. Whatever the bridegroom gave the bride in money or property was grabbed by her father because the girl was his property which he had sold to her husband for a price.

Islam attempted to eradicate all the evils enumerated above and the extent to which it has succeeded is a matter of history. We have already stated that due to their peculiar geographical and economic conditions the tribes reverted to their old predatory habits because of the difficulty of controlling them from any strong centre, but after the territorial expansion of Islam there was large-scale migration to fertile lands. These very tribes about which the Qur'an said that they were hardened in infidelity produced a progeny

in better and settled conditions that became the vanguard of a dynamic and progressive civilisation imbibing the arts and sciences of other cultures and advancing them by a creative synthesis with Islamic outlook and Islamic values. They proved to be an excellent raw material to be moulded into a superior culture. Perhaps with all their vices they possessed certain traits and potentialities which were best suited to be channelled into creative life. Let us try to take stock of these traits.

To start with a physical basis, the Arabs were a tough and healthy race. Their geography and severe struggle for existence had weeded out unhealthy strains and only those had survived and procreated who were adapted to this inhospitable environment. Their isolation protected them from any admixture of weaker and degenerate races. They were rightly proud of their racial purity and were so particular about their pedigrees and genealogies that they transmitted by a constant tradition the records of their descent from their great ancestors. Mere independence may not be a value by itself, but who can deny that all the real values of life are rooted in a sentiment of freedom? They were a freedom-loving people and their tribal life was regulated by a kind of primitive democracy. There was neither kingship nor hereditary aristocracy among them in which even degenerates have power and influence merely because of the accident of birth. Within each tribe there was classless society, and individuals were honoured only if they possessed some intrinsic qualities: it may be bravery or generosity or a genius for poetry. They would not acknowledge the leadership of a man simply because he happened to be the descendant of a man who was great in his own right; to gain respect he must prove his worth by his own conduct. They had never been subjugated by the great imperial powers that rose and fell beyond their borders without stretching their tentacles into their private and public life. Nor had any proselytising religion enveloped

them in its fold. They did practise idolatrous polytheism, but their religion sat very loose on them. We have already said in an earlier chapter that sometimes they would allow a son to become a Jew if he survived; where religious conviction was deep, such a vow would be inconceivable.

It is a historical fact that the great religions around them were in a bad plight and had lost all regenerative force. As Carlyle has said in his essay on Muhammad, Christians blame Islam for having swept away Christianity in its dynamic sweep, but what was this Christianity? It was only fuel for the fire of Muhammad. Judaism was the same, if not still worse, as had caused the revolt of Jesus against it!—a heap of ten thousand laws and rituals, callous and cruel and depleted of any inner spiritual attitudes. Christianity, which after Paul had claimed the supersession of law by Love was spending its energies in the determination of the nature of Trinity, was either actively engaged in persecuting heretics or finding salvation in ascetic denial of the world and mortification of the flesh. Zoroastrianism had deviated from the ethical monotheism of Zoroaster and sunk into fantastic dualism mixed up again with gods and spirits, and vying with Christianity in religious persecution. The realistic temperament of the Arabs had prevented them from indulgence in metaphysical disputes and theological wranglings. If there were a few genuinely religious-minded individuals among them, they became undogmatic theists like the Hanifs who were there before Islam. If the Arabs had been firmly in the clutches of the priesthoods of any of these great religions, even a religion like Islam or the forceful personality of a Muhammad could not have disentangled them from these involvements. It was their freedom from any imperial or theocratic hold and their realism that made them respond to a religious movement after having tried unsuccessfully to resist it. Besides being realists they were also naturalists. The jinn they believed in could hardly be

called supernatural powers; they were only human-like themselves with certain special powers. They were neither metaphysicians nor believers in mysteries, nor could ultrarational dogmas evoke any response in their mind. Greek dialectic would have appeared to them as a frivolous game of a rat trying to find his way to his food through a specially prepared intricate maze. They were temperamentally ready only for a simple creed, a creed without dogmas. They believed in God even before Islam, but their theism was of a very tenuous nature that could go along with polytheism which had overwhelmed it. Their theism required only purging and that is exactly what Islam did. Islam drew certain logical corollaries from belief in an all-wise and beneficent Creator and connected the attributes of God with demands of human morality. Arabia had no books either of metaphysics or theology, so there was no battle of books in which Islam may have been compelled to take part, sacrificing the substance of religion to verbal quibbles. What grievous trouble has Jesus with the worshippers of the letter among his nation, the People of the Book? And what long travail had Buddha to suffer in wrestling with Brahmanic lore, trying one panacea of salvation after another reducing himself to a cadavre in ascetic practices prescribed by various schools before he could be enlightened about all these futilities and inanities.

Because of their illiteracy the Arabs lived closer to Nature which made them fit to accept a natural religion which did not base itself on miracles and mysteries; God sent to them a Prophet who was also unburdened with books. No fundamental tenet of Islam is based on a miracle or refers to any supernatural belief or ultrarational dogma. Islam's simple monotheism is based on a rational approach to Reality, and even philosophical theism, starting from dogmatic presumption, reaches it by pure reason. If any religion could claim to be natural and rational, it is Islam. Such a

religion could be acceptable initially to people who were not overwhelmed by supernaturalism and were not in search of salvation by transcendence of physical and human nature. The Arabs were not in search of salvation in the sense in which Buddhism, Brahmanism or dogmatic Christianity conceived it. The premise of the former two creeds was the illusory nature of the world and all life which engendered ignorance and pain and necessitated an infinite series of rebirths which may degrade egos to assume the bodies of animals; every birth, high or low, is the result of an inexorable law of *Karma*. The Indian conception of salvation was to rise above this sorry scheme of things either through knowledge of the identity of the individual with the Cosmic transcendent Self or through ascetic annihilation of the will to live. In the last analysis they were life-negating creeds; they aspired for good riddance. The Christian conception of salvation was to get rid of the bad heritage of sinfulness passed on to the whole of humanity. Humanity could not save itself by good deeds, as the really good deeds deserving of well-being and happiness had become impossible for it on account of the first great Fall which God could not forgive. The only alternative left for a just and merciful God was to atone for the sinfulness of humanity by sacrificing His own Eternal Son. Only acceptance of this Vicarious Atonement can free humanity from a well-deserved damnation. The Hindus said that life in its origin is illusory and painful, and Christianity said that the spring of life is poisoned at the source. These conceptions necessarily lead to a pessimistic view of life and, therefore, their conceptions of salvation are centred in seeking release from life which is damnation of one kind or another. Against these beliefs Islam taught that life is a gift of God replete with blessings and pregnant with immense potentialities for good if man uses his reason and free will rightly with which he is specially endowed. By misuse of these gifts he can sink below the animals,

but when rightly directed he can rise above the angels. He is not created to seek salvation from a condemned existence but to strive for well-being here and hereafter. There is no conception of salvation in Islam ; the Muslim seeks well-being through rational and virtuous living.

Our Lord ! grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter (ii. 201).

Faith in a good God is essential for well-being because it offers a guarantee for the preservation of all values and uplifts man by the progressive assimilation of Divine attributes. It frees him from all irrational fears and delivers him from the worship of natural and supernatural powers. Faith in such a God Who holds an ultimate ideal for the amelioration of human life and convinces him of the objectivity and validity of values, and virtuous living corresponding to this ideal are the only instruments for the attainment of well-being. This undogmatic, humanistic and natural faith could have been accepted only by a people whose nature had not been corrupted by metaphysical beliefs and mysteries and who sought not deliverance from life but better life to actualise its immense potentialities for good. On this account Islam is accused of materialism, sensualism and naturalism ; it is accused because it says "Yes" to life. Deussen, the great Sanskritist and historian of philosophy (*German History of Philosophy*, five volumes) who, like Schopenhauer, was under the influence of Vedantic and Buddhistic metaphysics, said about Islam that it was not a spiritual religion because it encourages man to adapt himself to this world, and teaches its followers not to transcend the life of the senses.

14

IS UNIVERSAL RELIGION POSSIBLE ?

TO envisage even the possibility of a universal religion appears to be too Utopian. Humanity in the past has never had one religion and the present humanity too is split up into a number of major religions which are further split up into numerous sects. The case is more or less the same in all religions. The greatest pulverisation into sects is found in Christendom : census in the U.S.A. alone listed more than three hundred sects. Hinduism too is a generic name for numerous beliefs and practices. The peculiar feature of Hinduism is the absence of any common belief with the result that in the Indian census the word "Hindu" is defined only negatively as a citizen of India who is not a Muslim, a Christian or a Buddhist. Buddhism too is divided into various sects held together only by reverence for the spirituality or divinity of Buddha. Islam too has sects though their differences are mainly political or juristic ; they all believe in the fundamental tenets of Islam : so that one would be justified in asserting that Islam has no sects with clearly defined dividing lines. The schism had only a political foundation. The Shi'ahs believe that 'Alī should have succeeded the Prophet, not by election or selection, but by right of spiritual descent from the Prophet, and the Caliphate or Imāmate should have descended in apostolic succession.

Believers in the unity and solidarity of humanity are dismayed by the irrational and sorry spectacle of the strife of creeds and sects. Spiritual religions, if properly understood and practised, should have worked as

a great uniting force to make humanity realise its common essence and its common aim and destiny, but in actual practice the vicissitudes of history and tradition have made them into a hopelessly divisive force. Science which is considered to be secular and mundane and technology that has resulted from its application have already made the world one ; it is only the forces of fanatical religion, with claims of the monopoly of Truth and Salvation along with equally fanatical and narrow nationalism based on language, race or geography, that stand in the way of the solidarity of humanity. The idea of the League of Nations, conceived and launched by the idealist Wilson, was the first hesitating attempt to create a common forum for nations who should be made to subscribe and submit to the principle of international morality. But the collective egoism of all nations great or small was too deep-rooted to submit to any idealism in practice. The nations clashed with a still greater cataclysm. The holocaust of the second global conflagration too would not have changed the psychology of national egoism sufficiently to prevent a third world war if science had not put the alternative before the two world powers, that they must now strive to have one world or they shall have none. The spirituality of great world teachers and the idealisms of philosophers and sages have failed to bring humanity to its senses which continues to glorify war as heroic. Science, by presenting the alternative of total destruction in which there will be no victor and no vanquished left, has eliminated the possibilities of a global war altogether. But there has been no psychological or ethical conversion ; humanity is only terrified and not converted ; the forces of jingoistic nationalism or imperialism are not annihilated but leashed. But the very fact that a body like the United Nations is in existence and has come to stay is a great initial step towards world peace. Science and technology have united humanity by annihilating distance and by making man believe in the universality and

objectivity of physical nature. The United Nations has created a forum for the discussion of international problems although its verdicts have as yet no force to make the recalcitrant nations submit. But even this relatively important and helpless body is able to achieve some good within its present limitations.

But, what is the world doing about religion which is another great divisive force in the emotional life of humanity? The days of religious wars waged mostly by Christian nations are over. The Muslims never waged a war to exterminate or convert the followers of other creeds. Among the Muslim sects there have occasionally been tensions and individual cases of pressure and persecution, but no Muslim sect ever gathered together its adherents to persecute or annihilate another religion or another Muslim sect. Religious war as such is a peculiar feature only of European history. The early Muslims after prolonged persecution and martyrdom had to stand up and defend their creed against barbarous tribes, but the moment they felt secure they proclaimed and practised religious liberty not only for themselves but for all. Militant paganism had to be overcome by force, all persuasion and attempts at conciliation having failed.

But whatever the Muslims or the Christians and others may have been guilty of in the past, the temper of humanity in general is so changed now that holy wars and crusades are no longer possible. That is surely an appreciable step towards the establishment of world peace. But the elimination of armed conflict is not enough. The segregative tendencies, emotional alienation and cold hostility continue. Every rationalist, every mystic and every lover of humanity deplores this state of affairs..

A common science of physical nature to which the scientists of all nations pay homage has become possible, after centuries of intellectual development and objective thinking. A political forum for all nations has become an actuality; fundamental rights of nations

and individuals have been accepted by all nations, though it will take a long time before they are also honoured in practice everywhere. The path of progress has been chalked out, the sense of direction and the goal are indisputable, the feet of humanity have been put on the road and the progressive accomplishment is left to the inherent forces of evolution.

Is anything similar possible about religion? The human genius that created a unified and unifying science and technology and also an agreement about fundamental human rights besides bringing into existence an institution for safeguarding international peace, however rudimentary it may be in its modest beginnings, should not fail to evolve modes of thought and action to lessen, if not eliminate, inter-faith tensions and take positive steps to advance inter-faith goodwill. Nations as well as religious beliefs and communities are creations of history as well as individual and social psychology. The forces of history have been changing from epoch to epoch and the sociology and psychology of religious beliefs and practices too have been a changing phenomenon. That which is a product of change cannot cease to be susceptible of further changes.

The question to be answered is whether in the matter of religion there has been slowly evolving a process of development from watertight particularism to some type of universalism. Luckily we can answer this question in the affirmative. There was a time when every tribe had its god or gods friendly to the tribe but hostile to other gods and their worshippers. Religion, along with morality at this stage, was tribal; the gods were exalted as powerful embodiments of the collective tribal egos. Besides their own quarrels they took an active part in the battles fought by their devotees. The development of Israelite religious consciousness first set aside the gods of surrounding tribes as less powerful and less divine and at the end denied their existence altogether. Then there remained only

one God, the Creator and Sustainer of the world of Nature and the world of Man. The elimination of a multiplicity of gods tended towards the unification of humanity and made possible the concept of a world order originating in the will of one Supreme Creator and supervised and sustained by one Power. But this did not completely curb man's primeval and deep-rooted tribalism. This one God, too, though universal in omnipotence and omniscience, was believed to be concerned mostly with the destinies of one particular people, and the vicissitudes of this one people formed the central theme of the cosmic drama. The concept of the Chosen People made tribalism enter the spacious mansion of Theism by the back door and in practice the One Universal God ceased to be universal although remaining the Supreme One. The monotheistic faiths, all professing to believe in one God, besides Whom there is none else, became even more bitterly hostile to one another than polytheistic religions which had gradually shown tolerance towards the gods of different tribes. The One God became a militant sovereign, the Lord of Hosts and extremely jealous of his sovereignty. Behold the bitter clash of the Jews and the Christians and of both with the followers of Islam. If God were genuinely believed to be the One Universal Father of all, it should follow logically that He should not treat a large number of humanity as consisting of step-children or bastards ; He would not create such an enormous progeny to be the fuel for Hell.

The Jewish consciousness was rooted in the concept of the Chosen People. Some of their great prophets, notwithstanding exalted ethical concepts, seem to be concerned mostly with the destiny of their own people for whose weal and woe Jehovah has a special and exclusive concern. Jesus is perhaps the most non-tribal of the Israelite prophets. The depth and breadth of his spirituality are in general extremely edifying, though there are some statements in the Gospels which are not consistent with the breadth of his vision and

his love : for instance, the passages in which he says that his chief mission is concerned with his own tribe or the indignant statement that he would not throw the food for the children to the dogs, the latter being the people who are outside his tribe or fold. They are so inconsistent with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount that one is inclined to believe that they are misstatements or interpolations. In general the Gospel of Jesus is a gospel not only of toleration but of positive and creative love even for those whom you would normally consider to be your enemies. To the practical man of the world the precept to love his enemies appears to be much too Utopian to be of any practical use in the lives of the individuals as well as nations. But it is the nature of the Ideal that it is always ahead of the Actual. All genuine moral and spiritual advance and the prospects of world peace lie in this direction. If Christianity had developed on these lines, it would have been the greatest blessing for mankind, but alas ! the followers of Jesus developed the idea of the Church Militant and justified it by quoting the Scripture that Christ himself had said that he had brought not peace but the sword. The moment the power of Imperial Rome became its ally, Christianity began to be poured into the moulds of Roman Imperialism and the Roman Catholic Church patterned itself on the power politics of the State. The persecuted became the persecutors and freedom of conscience was strangled. The horrible tortures of the Inquisition were perpetrated in the name of the Prince of Peace who had advised them to conquer evil by love and not by violent resistance or violence.

Christianity too fell a victim to the idea of the Chosen People: the followers of Jesus became the Chosen People. Religion, instead of developing as a universal human phenomenon, became identified with a historical event. The Christian dogma which Jesus the great monotheist would not himself have understood was a reversion to the Jewish idea on the one

hand and to pagan metaphysics and institutions on the other. Graeco-Roman paganism had always tended to deify heroes and emperors, so when Christianity spread in these regions it was easy to identify Jesus with God Almighty Himself. The death of a god and his resurrection, also a pagan idea, was incorporated in dogmatic Christianity. Seeking oneness with a martyred god by eating him and assimilating his actual flesh and blood was also an ancient idea in the mystery religions of the Mediterranean region. Holy Communion with firm belief in trans-substantiation became the holiest of all sacraments. Incarnation, Crucifixion, Atonement, the miracle of the birth and death of Jesus, fragments of mystery religions and gnosticism along with Greek metaphysics became the central truths of Christianity. All this would certainly have been condemned by Jesus as foolish mumbo jumbo, utter hocus pocus and horrible blasphemy. Jesus could never have understood what could possibly be meant by the terms "Mother of God" or "death of God". He could have understood God in His great mercy forgiving the sins of man but God taking on a human body and dying for the sins of man would have been considered by him as utter foolishness.

What I mean to say is that the pure theism of Jesus with universal love as the essential attribute of God, if it had remained unsullied and unencumbered by narrow Jewish remnants and pagan mysteries and metaphysics, could have ultimately become the life-ameliorating creed of the whole of religious-minded humanity.

Early Christianity became ascetic, adopting a negative attitude towards life. The Kingdom of Heaven was not any transmundane realm beyond time and space and physical nature which could be attained by annihilation or repudiation of Nature. The Kingdom of Heaven is within the heart and soul of man. And Jesus promised that those who enter this

Kingdom are not to be deprived of all that is genuinely valuable in life, for he said that everything else shall be added unto it. What he wanted was a transvaluation of values. There is nothing wrong about the goods of life as such, but when they are sought for their own sake and are considered not as instrumental but intrinsic values as if they were the be-all and the end-all of existence, they become hindrances for the life of the spirit. Those who consider these goods only as life lose real and abiding life in seeking them. On the other hand, for those who aim at real life material goods could be means and not ends. It is a question of priority. What is it that man should seek first as an intrinsic value? But values have to be embodied in the physical realm of which the human body is a part. I do not think that Jesus was a transcendental mystic with an other-worldly outlook. If you draw corollaries from his belief that God is Love, you cannot derive negative asceticism from it. The Infinite Love of God must be Creative Love creating beings who are both subjects and objects of love. There must be interrelation of a personal kind between these beings and between them and God. But relations do not exist in a vacuum; they require a world of things as well as a world of beings. If the Realm of the Spirit is a Realm of Ends, these ends require a world which provides means for the realisation of these ends. The Realm of Nature may be considered as a Realm of Means. Creative Love must create Beauty which has to be embodied in forms. A healthy human organism is one of the most beautiful and admirable products of God's Creative Love. The ascetic who starves and tortures it in the hope of spiritual development or what he considers to be salvation is hopelessly misguided. By torturing the body he is mutilating the spirit as well, for they are two aspects of the same reality. Jesus was mentally as well as physically a very healthy man. He had such an abundance of it that his sheer presence or a casual contact healed the sick. He was not a

dispenser of disease but of physical as well as mental health.

It is one of the great tragedies of religious history that from the very beginning Jesus has been misunderstood. Jewish priesthood, the eternal enemy of all reforming prophethood, took him for a heretic and a rebel because he preached that Law was made for man and not man for Law. Pragmatism is wrongly taken to be antagonistic to revealed religion, but here was seen Jesus as a great pragmatist who judged the truth of things by the sole criterion of life-values. The pragmatist of the type of William James was elaborating only philosophically the precept of Jesus that a tree is known by its fruit. The narrow-minded hide-bound priesthood, for whom religion was mainly a shell without kernel, could not understand such a man for whom the free life of the spirit was the only genuine religion. Nor did his close associates understand him as is evident from the Gospel records. They considered him to be a kind of super-magician who extracted evil spirits from the bodies of human beings and infused them into the bodies of innocent animals who tortured them. If they had understood an iota of his spirituality which was nothing else than abundant love for all creatures, they could never have ascribed such a cruel act to him. Could a spiritual man have cursed a fig tree because it happened to disappoint him being bare of fruit due to natural causes? They could not understand his metaphor of the Kingdom of Heaven and put childish and silly questions about it. The Gospel records show that they were utterly nonplussed when he was crucified, and their belief was restored when he was seen alive moving about three days after he was put in a grave, and the grave was found to be empty. This they thought to be an extraordinary phenomenon and a proof of Jesus's conquest of death. They did not know that this was a phenomenon that had occurred in numerous places about not only saints but ordinary human beings. Then he was be-

lived to have ascended to heaven because he had to go back to his Father Whose abode was in the skies. They may be excused because this was the general type of primitive religious consciousness. But what would you say of a modern well-educated pope who in the middle of the twentieth century orders all Catholics henceforward to believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, too was bodily lifted to heaven. I wonder if Jesus is better understood even now in this intellectually enlightened age.

Did Saint Paul understand him? He was born a Jew but, like most of his contemporaneous intellectual Jews imbued with Greek metaphysics, he wrapped the personality of Jesus in mysteries, metaphysics and the gnostic lore, and created the cult of Jesus. His genius converted the dispensation of Christ into Paulinity. The larger part of dogmatic Christianity is the creation of St Paul. A modest man like Jesus who would not ascribe even goodness to himself, saying that not he but his Father was good, was mysteriously identified with the Father, co-eternal and co-eval with Him. Along with another being, the Holy Ghost, the enigma of Trinity, became the central dogma and bone of contention for metaphysical theologians. The healthy ethics of Christ was relegated to the background along with his pure and exalted monotheism.

Now the believers in all these exotic dogmas became the Chosen People. Belief in Incarnation, Vicarious Punishment for the Sin of Adam, Atonement, Original Sin and Trinity became the indispensable condition for salvation. The life-giving spirituality of Jesus with his healthy ethical theism was buried under these accretions. It is only a few freethinking Christians who have extracted again the abiding value of the life and teaching of Jesus from the chaff with which it was almost inextricably mixed for these two millenniums. For these liberal Christians Jesus has again become the great Israelite Prophet that he really

was, claiming no divinity, preaching and practising purity of conduct, emphasising the spirit *versus* the letter, minimising external observances, paying more attention to attitudes than to visible behaviour, exalting Love over Law and identifying God with Universal Love. Humanity requires no better religion than this, but orthodox Christianity considers it to be much too thin; it would not be satisfied with the exalted humanity of Christ unless it is identified with absolute divinity, and unless the life and death of Christ are believed to be the finale of cosmic drama of the fall and redemption of man.

The distinguishing and characteristic elements of dogmatic Christianity make it unfit to be acceptable to enlightened and liberal Christians, far less to the rest of humanity.

Let me sum up the essential characteristics of a universal religion before I proceed further:

The belief that the foundations of existence are spiritual and God is the creative Spirit of Life.

The human spirit is a partialised expression of the Divine Spirit.

God, the Cosmic Soul of all existence, is immanent in it but transcends it at the same time. He is immanent in a much more intimate and ineffable manner than the artist is immanent in his creation. He transcends all that He creates because His potential being is infinitely greater than His total creation at any stage of manifestation.

Communion with the Cosmic Creative Force is possible for the human spirit through knowledge, through prayer, through goodness, and through the application and creation of Beauty.

Man is destined to share in the attributes of God. God being Light and Love, the increase of knowledge and the increase of love along with it can make man more and more godlike.

Sense-perception and logical reason are not the only avenues of the knowledge of reality. Reality has supra-

sensuous and supra-intellectual aspects or dimensions of being. The human spirit in an exalted stage can come into contact with these aspects deriving more life from them and the light that never was on sea or land. Revelation is a reality.

If there are inner contradictions in the revelations of a prophet or a saint or if they are obviously contrary to scientifically established facts, it is allowable to look at them critically. Among conflicting revelations there is no possibility of an objective judgment except by the exercise of unprejudiced reason and intrinsic human values of life. There must not be any crass contradiction between the verdicts of the pure light and reason, and no revelation is to be accepted as true if it negates ultimate human values, because God is the fountain and prefection of these values. Religion, finally, is a belief in the conservation of values.

No religion can now command universal approval which runs counter to the conception of evolution in general. The application of the idea of evolution to every item of existence is now universally accepted as valid. Material or vital forms as they are now found are products of a long course of evolution. Whether it is the solar system or the human body, they assumed their present shape because of the working of natural forces. Life on our planet undoubtedly had a beginning in time. Its origin may not yet be scientifically intelligible or demonstrable, but there is no doubt that it originated somewhere here when conditions became favourable. Through immeasurable ages the unicellular pulsation of life has reached its highest manifestations in the human organism. No form of life came into existence *ex nihilo* at a stroke. There are differences of opinion about its origin and its process of progressive variation and development. Whether it is mechanical or emergent or creative is only a difference of explanation of the fact that is incontrovertible. It is possible for a theist to believe that the whole process is God-planned and God-directed or God is the Vital Creative and Evolu-

tionary Urge, but in the intellectual climate of a rational and scientific age any cosmogony or metaphysics which ignores the fact itself has no chance of acceptance.

The unity and solidarity of humanity, irrespective of race or creed or colour, is another indispensable belief for any religion that aspires to be universal. As genuine religion must repudiate the conception of a Chosen People, so must it denounce the mistaken belief of races inherently superior and inherently inferior. The human psycho-physical organism is basically similar in structure, function and instinct. It is only variety of environmental factors and processes of history that create variety of habits and customs. A white child immediately after birth entrusted to negro parents living in negro environment would grow up as a negro child in outlook and in conduct; the social heritage of the white man's civilisation shall find no traces in his life. Similarly, a negro granted an equality of opportunity and equalitarian human treatment in a white society would show no inferiority in intelligence quotient as compared with a white child. This is a proved sociological and scientific fact. This has also been an accepted fact in the higher religious consciousness everywhere. Whatever one may think about the mystical metaphysics of Buddha, one fact is indispensable about his teaching that he repudiated the deeply-rooted system of the Hindus. For him the human predicament was the same for the entire human race; the disease being the same, the remedy was also the same. He was equalitarian and that was the chief reason why Brahmanism, feeling its superiority seriously threatened, contrived to drive away this creed from the Indian subcontinent. Nor did Jesus believe that the Jew possesses any inherent superiority over the Gentile; for him human beings were all children of the one heavenly Father. Muhammad emphatically preached and practised the doctrine of the equality of mankind. He said: "Follow your leader, even if he is a negro." In his last sermon, he proclaimed: "No Arab

as such is superior to a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab as such superior to an Arab; in the sight of God the superior person is only the one possessing a superior character."

These are the characteristics of true religion. It is possible that theologies may continue to differ because they are attempts at intellectual formulation and logical construction. Speculations about the nature of Reality and Truth shall continue to occupy man's intellectual and imaginative faculties. Rituals, external observances and modes of worship can never become uniform. Religious communities shall continue to feel special attachment for the founders of different creeds. The complexion of religious life in general shall also vary from nation to nation and from epoch to epoch. Superstructures of religions shall present different patterns and plans, but the foundations are bound to be the same if religious consciousness is rooted in an objective reality and is not merely a subjective or a social phenomenon dominated by only traditional, historical and irrational factors.

There is no doubt that there has been a long and continuous evolution of the idea of God, but this does not mean that God, the Real, is a product of this evolution. Physical science which is taken to be more real than religious consciousness is also a product of a long evolution, but no materialistic or naturalistic scientist would deny that even in its primitive gropings it was dealing with an actual reality. Nature with its laws was there all the time; only speculations about it differed. Similarly, religious consciousness sensed even in its first awakenings that some superior power, immensely greater than the spirit of man and yet akin to it, was the noumenal ground of all natural phenomena. Man's early thought was animistic and anthromorphic. But even in these primitive beginnings man was not utterly misguided. Physical sciences in their advance gradually dehumanised and impersonalised Nature, but it was only a methodologi-

cal convenience and practicability. When the Greek Sophist Protagoras said that man is the measure of the universe it was considered to be a metaphysical and religious heresy. But now the philosophers of science like Eddington have returned to a similar position. They have begun to prove that science with its impersonality is a construction of the human mind and the universe as known to senses and to science is no mirror of an Absolute Reality but a reflexion of the pragmatic necessities of the human mind. It was Kant who started putting man back into the centre of all perceived reality. We do not discover the laws of an objectively given and regulated Nature but give law to it, pouring unknown and unknowable data into the moulds of Time and Space and Causation which have only an instrumental existence being the categories of the human mind and not independent objective and absolute realities.

Speculations about the material universe moved from hylozoism of the early Greek thinkers like Thales and Anaxagoras through animism, anthropomorphism and, proceeding through impersonal mechanistic materialism, have gradually returned to man being himself the source of what he considers to be objective, regulated Nature. Science has made continuous progress because of the faith that orderly Nature exists and it is possible to convert its mysteries progressively into demonstrable knowledge.

As man's senses and intellect have had implicit faith in the objective reality of physical Nature, though the understanding of it has been changing and evolving, so religious consciousness has, either by actual experience or by belief, has held the unseen and superior spiritual ground of being to be real, rather more real than phenomenal Nature. Mystical metaphysics of the type of Plotinus has conceived it as the ineffable transcendent One, attributeless in its original essence but creator of beings and things and attribute in a descending scale through eternal emanation. Reli-

gions of Semitic origin, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, viewed this Ultimate Reality as a transcendent personality endowed with consciousness, will and purpose. Buddhism and Vedantic Hinduism conceived it in impersonal terms. But all have agreed that the human ego can shed its limitations by the cognitive and volitional identity. All religious consciousness demands a surrender of the individual self to this ultimate reality conceived as a super-self or as the ground of being that transcends all the categories of existence. All religions aim at it as the final goal of man and all agree that this surrender opens the door to wider existence and more real life.

Human beings at different moral and intellectual levels have conceived it in a different manner and even in the same religious community individuals differ in their approach, and his variety of approach is desirable. Science has advanced because of this freedom of approach. Imposed uniformity paralyses the human spirit in the intellectual as well as in the religious sphere. Therefore, any religion desirous of being acceptable to all free men must grant this freedom. Men's approach to physical Nature is also various. Pythagoras conceived of Ultimate Reality as essentially mathematical, every thing and every process being a manifestation and embodiment of numbers. After more than two millenniums of the study of Nature and speculations about it, James Jeans, the philosopher of science, has again subscribed to this creed. For Plato God was a pyramid of Ideas whose apex is the concept of the Good. For Aristotle God was a self-thinking Thought, a total coincidence of the subject and the object, or Pure Form without matter. For the Israelite prophets God was essentially a moral monitor dispensing rewards and punishments for obedience or disobedience to His revealed commands.

The conception of God and speculation about His attributes shall continue to vary in the future as it has developed and varied in the past. Reality is infinite

and manysided ; therefore the possible and potential attitudes towards it must be manifold. The mistake of all theologies and rigid orthodoxies is to talk about God as if He is completely known or completely knowable. The famous *Sūfī* Hallāj rightly remarked that the known is always less than the knower because it is contained in the knower's consciousness and the container is always bigger than the content; therefore, man's comprehension of God falls short even of his own consciousness.

A religion can become acceptable to all religious-minded people if it keeps the comprehension of the Divine open. This will necessarily lead to religious tolerance and tend towards liberalism, discounting the monopoly of any rigid and closed orthodoxy. God may be approached intellectually or morally or aesthetically ; Truth, Beauty and Goodness may be the triune aspects of an essential unity. Let some call Him the moral order of the universe and others feel Him with the emotional attitude of love or reverence. For some the categorical imperative may be duty as for others it may be unconditional love. For some He may be a personal God and for others the limitations of personality may be too narrow to be attributed to the Cosmic Soul or Over-Soul whose manifestations are personal as well as impersonal, and He in His essence transcends both. Let no theology symbolising God as the Father assert any superiority over another metaphor depicting Him as Lord and Master. These are only characterisations of aspects all of which are relatively real but none of which can claim to be absolute and exclusively true.

Religious belief is not primarily an intellectual construction; logic alone could not have led human beings to God if He had not been apprehended by deeply-rooted instincts and vital needs, and if experience of a non-rational character had not been the original fountain-head of faith. Religious experiences are various. Those concerned with communion with a higher spiritual

power have much in common in the prophets and saints of all faiths, but individual characteristics and traditional beliefs have also in numerous cases presented moulds into which the experience has been poured. Notwithstanding this variety, it is not difficult to deduce common factors which establish the universal and objective factors common to all perceptions of the Over-Soul, the Spiritual Ground of all existence.

No one in the history of religion has surveyed religious experiences in all their variety as the open-minded psychologist and philosopher William James. In drawing his final conclusions he has proceeded with extreme caution and without any presuppositions or dogmatic beliefs. His conclusions, therefore, are extremely valuable in an attempt to put religion on a universal and objective basis. I will quote here his conclusions without his arguments. He says :

Disregarding the over-beliefs and confining ourselves to what is common and generic, we have in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, is literally and objectively true as far as it goes. The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely "understandable" world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong, in the most intimate sense, wherever our ideals belong. Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. But that which produces effects in another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal.

This reality is called God in theistic religions.

James sums up the characteristics of religious life

as follows with respect to the beliefs inherent in it:

- (1) That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe, from which it draws its chief significance.
- (2) That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end.
- (3) That prayer or inner communion with the spirit therefore —be that spirit God or Law—is a process wherein work is really done and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.

Religion includes also the following psychological characteristics:

- (4) A new zest which adds itself like a gift to life and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism.
- (5) An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.

I do not feel any hesitation in subscribing to every word of the conclusions reached by one of the master-minds of the West both for the reasons that led him to these beliefs and because the creed in which I was born tallies with these conclusions. A liberal Christian, not wedded to any traditionally handed dogma, would call it the essence of true Christianity. I call the sum total of these beliefs Islam because the Qur'ānic Islam is essentially this, and the essence of true religion is defined as such in the Qur'ān. Islam means surrender of the finite will to the Infinite, Creative and Sustaining Ground of Existence. Having defined religion in these terms, the Qur'ān is right in claiming and proclaiming that Islam only is the true religion and whatever runs counter to it is false.

The rest of this book is a vindication of this claim.

WHAT IS ISLAM?

THE question on the face of it is very simple, and one may expect a simple, clear-cut and unambiguous answer to it, but a serious attempt to answer it in a manner that should satisfy all its adherents on the one hand and those who stand outside the pale of it on the other, involves one in great difficulties. The non-Muslim thinks that by Islam is meant the religion that was preached and practised by Prophet Muḥammad, but neither the Prophet himself nor the revealed Book that embodies his message considers Islam as some very special and exclusive truth unknown to the world before the mission of Muḥammad. The Holy Qur'ān identifies Islam with true religion which is as old as humanity itself because it was the truth as revealed to Adam who in some verses is identified with humanity. Islam is presented in the Qur'ān as a universal religion. It means belief in one omnipotent, omniscient Creator and Sustainer of all life and all the worlds, Who demands that man should freely surrender his will to the will of God as revealed by the laws of Nature, by Reason, and by Revelation. This surrender is not a state of passivity but is an active and determined co-operation with the Divine Will which makes the finite creature participate in the realisation of the Good which is the purpose of God and the aim of life. True religion, in its abiding and unalterable essence, is nothing but this attuning of the finite with the infinite. Whoever has ever believed in this Truth and lived up to it is a Muslim. According to this view which is reiterated in the Qur'ān in numerous places,

whatever creed is contrary to this is not a true religion and shall make the upholder of it stumble into grievous error with its evil consequences both here and in the hereafter. This truth was not arrived at by man by his sense-experience or logical reasoning, but has been a gift of the Creator to some chosen souls. There never was a community to which such gifted guides were not sent to preach the one universal truth to lead man back to his Creator. The Qur'ān repudiates the doctrine of any One Chosen People who had the monopoly of Truth and Salvation. The gifts of the Spirit are as universal as the benefits of physical Nature. According to the Qur'ān, Abraham, Moses and Jesus all were Muslims because the essence of their teaching was belief in one good God, the Lord of Mercy, Justice and Righteousness. All these great guides exhorted people to assimilate these Divine Attributes and embody them in their individual and collective behaviour. The prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān are a chosen few known to what are called the People of the Book, but the unmentioned are legion because no community has been without some in long history. The great criterion of Truth is its universality. If any community in the past or in the present has accepted a great spiritual leader as its guide, the Qur'ānic presumption is that such a man was a divinely-commissioned messenger of God. The Qur'ān teaches that, although far above the common level of the communities among which they arose, they were essentially human beings specially endowed with the sense of justice, love and wisdom. The spiritual power of such great souls misled their followers into the belief that they were gods or it was the One Supreme Creator Who had got Himself incarnated into them. One of the essential functions of the Prophet of Islam was to make the followers of these great teachers realise this error which was a product of exaggerated reverence, or the desire to meet their Lord and Creator in flesh and blood. The Qur'ān calls all these gifted guides as the messengers

and servants of the One Supreme God. If it was God Almighty Himself Who had descended into phenomenal existence to guide humanity, the purpose of guidance could not be achieved in this manner, because in order to influence humanity the guide must be a man who should act as an exemplar. He should be a man who has been an earnest seeker before he has found the Truth ; he must have experienced the conflicts of life and met its challenges by a continued striving. He must have knocked before the door was opened ; he must have groped before he found his way. It is the rationalising and spiritualising of the human instincts that make a man a spiritual exemplar. If such a man was from the very beginning God Himself, of what use could his life be to a man who wants to triumph over obstacles? For God there could be no obstacles.

The Qur'an reminds the reader repeatedly that it is not a new Revelation : it is only a reminder and the Prophet himself is called a Reminder. In presenting the essentials of the theistic outlook the Book constantly reminds the reader that it is the creed of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and all the prophets who preceded Muhammed. Should one conclude from this that there was nothing new about this Message? We shall try to answer this question briefly.

According to the Qur'an, the essential truth about God and Existence is as old as Adam, that is to say, it was co-existent with the awakening of human consciousness. No prophet ever considered himself to be an innovator or professed to be the founder of a new sect. No one claimed that the essentials of religion have been revealed to him for the first time. But the application of the Basic Truth to the life of different communities in different epochs was modified according to different circumstances.

The Prophet is reported to have said that to the Basic Truth the previous prophets have been adding something continuously in the superstructure and he

himself is only the last brick. The Prophet himself did not explicitly elucidate the nature of this last brick, but one could easily take this to be the keystone of the arch that has to sustain the weight of all the superstructures of life that may be subsequently raised on it. In the Qur'an itself one can see that the superstructure has become so rich and spacious that all essential human relations are comprehended in it. The fact is historically true that Islam became a great revolutionary movement from the very outset, either supplanting or reforming or unforming old cultures. No great revolution is possible without some destruction of the old and rotting structures, but an evolutionary revolution aims at reconstruction on more solid and broader foundations. One would like to know whether the spiritual foundations of life had not already been sufficiently broadened by great prophets of Israel, culminating in the mission of Jesus. There is no doubt that Jesus both deepened and broadened the essential spiritual attitude towards life, but he had no opportunity to demonstrate to humanity how to apply this attitude to social, political and economic problems. His essential conviction was that once people realised the Kingdom of Heaven within their souls everything else would be added unto it. There is a great truth embodied in this idealism, but human nature and human relations that are a resultant of it demand that some God-commissioned great teacher should demonstrate how these idealistic generalities are to be applied to moralise and spiritualise the complicated patterns of human existence.

Neither Buddha nor Jesus grappled with the problems of civilisation. So what was new in Islam was not the concept of a just and loving God and the demand from man that he should assimilate the Divine Attributes of Justice and Love to the extent that it is humanly possible, but the manner and the pattern according to which human relations must be remoulded and recast so that the actualities of life

may be suffused with the light of the Ideal. Because Jesus did not concern himself with the patterns of civilisation and culture, his immediate followers made Christianity an otherworldly and ascetic religion. They lived in the conviction that this whole sorry scheme of things was going to be shattered very soon and the world was coming to an end, so why bother about a structure whose collapse was imminent ? Before Islam two great creeds had claimed large portion of humanity—Buddhism and Christianity—and for both spirituality and salvation had become identical with asceticism ; *bhikshus* and monks became exemplars of ideal humanity. Islam succeeded in revolutionising life by changing the meaning of religion which had become a dualism of the spirit and the flesh. Islam defined religion or spirituality as living one's full life in this mundane existence with a spiritual attitude. Paul Deussen, the great German Sanskritist and a historian of philosophy, who, besides ascetic Christianity, was deeply influenced by Buddhist metaphysics and *Vedanta*, says that Islam should not be called a religion because it sanctifies the life of the senses while a true religion should try to negate them; religion, according to him, should teach men how to escape from the demands of the flesh and the world in general which is an unreal and fleeting phenomenal *Maya*. Goethe, the best product of European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, characterised the medieval Christian outlook as an attitude that considered all Nature as a sin and intellect as the devil. Nietzsche's revolt against Christianity, though not justified in every respect, was mainly based on its life-negating worldview. He says that there are only two types of religion : those that say Yes to life and affirm it and those that say No to life and attempt to negate it. He obviously was referring to creeds like ascetic Christianity, monastic Buddhism and Vedantic Hinduism.

It is a curious irony of history that what we

characterise as the revolutionary outlook of Islam appears to be much more the creed of the modern Christian West than of the Muslims. The Western Christian accuses the Muslims of impoverishing life by resigning themselves to Destiny, making no attempts to ameliorate life by the conquest of Nature through knowledge, and they consider Islam to be responsible for this passive and quiescent attitude which has made the Muslims contented and resigned to political slavery, economic poverty, physical misery and intellectual backwardness. Yes, I agree that the Christian West is much more alive today than the Muslim world, although in this assertion and affirmation of life, moral and spiritual values have been submerged to a considerable extent by man's intoxication with material well-being. Their moral and spiritual teachers, thinkers and reformers are acutely conscious of the danger if scientific and technological development is not controlled and harnessed by a spiritual outlook. As we have said already, Islam was basically an attitude towards life; it was an affirmative attitude considering all Nature, human and cosmic, to be a Great Revelation; at a lower level of manifestation even matter is spiritual. The potentialities of Life and Nature are infinite and in the language of the Qur'an the laws of Nature are the unchanging habits of God. Life was not created to be renounced, nor was Nature created to be despised. Religion is defined in the Qur'an in unequivocal terms as the knowledge of eternal laws and abiding values and a life lived according to them. And it is said that as God is impartial with respect to individuals, so is He impartial with respect to communities or nations. Whichever nation embodies this truth more than others in its intellectual, moral and social existence shall become strong and prosperous. Among the nations too the law of natural selection and survival of the fittest holds. It is to such nations that the destinies of humanity are entrusted. When vision

develops nations flourish, and when vision fails nations perish. God is not like the proverbial patriot who would support the cause of his country, right or wrong. The Qur'an praised the faithful followers of early Islam, the people who had imbibed the creed of Islam in all its purity and were the best of communities destined to become the leaders of humanity and witnesses of God's Truth. The Qur'an uses the same word "Haqq" for God as well as Truth—God is Truth and Truth is God. But along with this praise the Book also issues a stern warning that "if you cease to embody it in your life, it shall certainly be passed on to others who are fit to uphold it." Islam did not base itself on miracles but on abiding truths of history and unalterable laws of Nature.

Is it not a historical fact that during the centuries of dynamic Islam the Muslims were politically strong, economically more prosperous, intellectually more active and creative than the other contemporaneous nations? Western writers who want to give no credit to Islam for the creative urge that manifested itself, not only in political strength and expansion, but evinced an unprecedented thirst for knowledge, search for other causes and motives. They would say that the Muslims succeeded because both Persia and Byzantium had become politically effete. Some have said that the Arabs owed their astounding military successes to superior horsemanship. The false allegation repeated *ad nauseum* for more than a millennium that Islam spread by the sword is still reiterated by the ignorant and the educated alike. The ground of attack is being shifted now and it is said that the basic urge was not the spread of the faith but political subjugation of the non-believers to fill the treasury by the collection of poll-tax. Rarely do we encounter a Western scholar who is compelled by the facts of history to acknowledge that Islam succeeded because it was a liberating movement which granted perfect freedom of conscience to all its citizens and enjoined on the Muslims to protect

the life and honour, creed and conscience of all the citizens of the realm.

The Western writers on Islam, when discussing Islamic laws and customs, morals and manners, refer everything to the Qur'an and the precept and practice of the Prophet. If they were consistent they should logically refer to those aspects of Islam which made its followers, at least for six centuries, the cultural leaders of mankind. The Medieval Ages in European history are called the Age of Faith but at the same time they are stigmatised as the Dark Ages. If it is acknowledged that Islam was the driving force and the ruling passion of Muslims during the dynamic and creative periods of Islam, then the Islamic Age of Faith coincides with the Age of Enlightenment. From the advent of Christianity down to the European Renaissance Europe was Christian, culturally stagnant and intellectually obscurantist. This book is not meant to probe into the causes that gradually made Europe emerge from darkness into comparative light, nor is it our purpose to analyse and survey the causes that made the Muslim world plunge into comparative darkness after the thirteenth century.

Our purpose in this book is to present Islam as a universal religion with no nation as such having a monopoly of truth and salvation. When the Muslims followed it more than others, they inherited the earth and became the vanguard of civilisation. When the course of history made them stagnant and other nations embodied more of it, they were driven to the wall and replaced by others. The Muslim Renaissance of which there are ample signs, if it is directed into proper channels, shall make the Muslims regain their lost paradise.

16

EVOLUTION

THE theory of evolution is the most revolutionary concept of the modern age. From the biological achievement of Darwin embodied in his two classical works, *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, the idea spread in ever-widening circles, and his own contemporary Herbert Spencer made a gigantic attempt in his *Synthetic Philosophy* to explain every phenomenon of cosmic or human existence on the basis of development from the simple to the complex. Much more than the heliocentric theory of the solar system which robbed the earth of its central importance in the universe, thereby shaking the entire foundation of the cosmogony which had become an integral and inalienable part of Christian theology, the modern theory of evolution made the entire system of old theology untenable. The impact of the concept of evolution has made profound changes in the intellectual and religious temper of the modern world.

There was quite a good guess about evolution made by Anaximander as early as the sixth century B.C. who proposed a theory of organic evolution. Although his theory was merely speculative and he could not substantiate it by any proofs or experiments, he anticipated Darwin by stating explicitly that there has been a progressive adaptation of organisms to the environment by means of the survival of the fittest. Man, he said, must have had as his progenitors and remote ancestors simpler organic beings and life may have started in the sea, and by variations and survival of the fittest some forms adapted themselves to land.

Greek thought did not develop the idea any further and even a scientifically-minded biologist and philosopher like Aristotle discarded it, because he was dominated by Plato's eternal ideas or "forms". The dominance of Aristotle in the field of science and philosophy for two millenniums prevented the human mind from thinking in terms of evolution until the philosopher Kant in 1755 proposed a nebular hypothesis for the formation or evolution of the solar system, followed in 1796 by Laplace, a mathematician and astrophysicist. He surmised that the solar system had evolved from hot gaseous nebulae to its present form. The theory of organic evolution became possible because of the accumulating data on animals and plants, the study of fossils and the geological structure of the earth which could be explained only on the basis of evolution that had gone on for millions of years.

We have observed that the theory of organic as well as cosmic evolution shook the foundations of Christian theology. Is it not bound to shake Muslim theology as well with a cataclysm because, apart from some tenets of dogmatic Christianity, there is much in common between the orthodox theology and cosmogony of these two religions? No orthodox Muslim theologian has ever conceived life and existence in terms of evolution, although some philosophers like Ibn Miskawaih and philosophic mystics like Rūmī presented pretty elaborate convictions about it. It is only in recent times that Iqbal, who confessed to be a disciple of Rūmī, reinterpreted Islam in terms of creative evolution. Iqbal was convinced that the Qur'an supported the dynamic and evolutionary view of life. He has not elaborated his thesis in any one place, though scattered in his philosophic poems, we find this concept of God and Life as perpetually creative advancing by the incessant creation of new forms and fresh values. Although no theology reconcilable with the concept of creative evolution has yet been constructed which would seek its support and justification from

the Qur'ān itself, we believe that it is possible to do so.

Before we make an attempt in this direction, let it be stated at the outset that the Qur'ān is essentially a book of moral and spiritual attitudes and not a treatise of physical sciences. When it repeatedly points out to the growth of live vegetation from apparently lifeless earth, it is not teaching botany but referring to the infinite creative power of God, deriving from this phenomenon the belief about man's survival after physical disintegration. According to the Qur'ān, Life and Death are alternating phases of God's eternally creative activity. Similarly, when it refers to sun, moon and stars, it is not teaching us astronomy but convincing us of a purposeful and orderly creation to lead us from creation to a rational and beneficent Creator. But, in spite of this, it is possible to find significant hints in the Qur'ān which point to God's mode of creation and the original state of the physical cosmos out of which the heavenly bodies have evolved.

The Qur'ān mentions many attributes of God, although it appears that some attributes are more basic than the others. For instance, the attribute of *Rahmat* whose connotation includes beneficence, mercy and love is given priority over other attributes. God is also called in the Qur'ān *Wadūd* which means the lover, but *Rahmat* being more comprehensive than love, it is said that this attribute covers the entire creation, meaning thereby that it is the creative urge of life which also guarantees sustenance. *Rahmat* makes God *Rahmān* as well as *Rahīm*, both words being derived from the same root *Rahmat*. The Holy Prophet himself explained these two attributes as follows: "Ar-Rahmān is the Beneficent God Whose love and mercy are ar-Rahīm is manifested in the creation of this world, and the Merciful God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes after." As *ar-Rahmān* He exercises creative love creating the very objects or beings that are to be loved and on whom mercy is to be exercised during the course of their

existence. Now, if Creative Love is infinite, it would not create a thing and then leave it as it is. The Qur'an says that God creates, gives the objects or beings their proper shape and constitution and acts as a Guide, to direct them towards the goal for which they were created.

He said, "Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal) (xx. 50).

If this is so, then creation cannot be a static fact. If things remain eternally the same, there cannot be any process of growth in which their potentialities may be progressively actualised. Therefore, the Qur'an says that God adds to His creation what He wills" (xxxv. 1).

Our Lord, Thou embraceth all things in mercy and knowledge (xl. 7).

He enjoined mercy on Himself (vi. 54).

The attributes of *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* would be sufficient to show that creation is a perpetual act. The creative love of God continues to add to His creation according to His will which is the will to love. What God has enjoined on Himself must be an eternal fact. The opening line of the Qur'an which a Muslim repeats before beginning anything gives us the essential nature of the Eternal Reality which is beneficently creative. To elucidate this concept of the Creator and His Creation still further, the opening verse of the Qur'an calls God *Rabb*, which means Lord as well as Sustainer and Developer. Rāghib, the most learned of the lexicographers of the Qur'an, translates *Rabb* as One Who fosters a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion. Then the verse says that God is not only the *Rabb* of mankind or any one world or any one realm of being, but He is the Lord of the worlds. The plural used here is noteworthy. Existence is a general concept which may comprise an infinity of modes or realms. We have before us the inorganic realm or the world of

matter, then the organic realm, the world of plant and animal life, then the world of mind, and beyond that the world of the spirit of which mankind in general has only a vague conception. Spinoza, the great Monist, said that God has infinite attributes, consciousness and extension (spatial realm) being only two of which we in our present state are cognizant. Apart from the general conception of the two worlds we generally talk about this world and the Hereafter. The Muslims use the literary expression of *hazdah hazar 'alam*, which literally means "eighty thousand worlds" meaning thereby an infinity of worlds or realms with different dimensions and categories. Now, according to the concept of God as *Rabb*, Lord as Sustainer and Developer, all these worlds must be in a perpetual process of development from one phase to the other aiming at proximate and remote goals of perfection. This process of amelioration and development must of necessity be an eternal process because the Qur'an regards God alone as the Ultimate Goal (lxxi. 42). As He is the Beginning, so is He the End (xcii. 13).

If existence were static, God's creative work and His manifestation would have ceased with the first creative fiat. The Qur'an says it is not so because every day God manifests Himself in a new manner (lv. 29) and the Muslim mystics inculcated the doctrine that nothing in existence is static or repeats itself with exact uniformity: "In God's manifestation there is no repetition."

The philosophy of evolution is a philosophy of change and a change for the better. If the stellar universe has evolved out of comparatively disordered nebulae and if our solar system is a product of astrophysical evolution and if life on this earth has evolved out of inorganic matter producing the mind and spirit of man capable of encompassing the infiniteness of time and space discerning orders and systems, then it is not difficult to believe even within the compass of scientific knowledge that the world or worlds that we know

of are being sustained and developed by a cosmic creative urge with a definite plan and a definite goal.

One God, who ever lives and loves,
One God, one Law, one Element,
And one far off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

—Tennyson, "In Memoriam"

When one mode of life or one system shows signs of having outlived its utility, the forces of life begin to drag it from within. Man is impatient (lxx. 19) because his span of life and vision is so short and limited, but God in His good time has been replacing one system by another, replacing nebulae by sidereal systems and replacing one system of human life by another. Every system has its day and when it ceases to benefit it is scraped, sometimes by a gradual process and at other times by a sudden revolution. This truth has been enunciated in the Qur'an in more than one place.

Let us start first with the astronomical world and see whether the Qur'an supports the view that the physical universe was launched on its course in a nebular condition in which, in the beginning, there were no separate bodies or systems. The earth and the heavenly systems were separated out of an indeterminate conglomerate mass and then life came into being when physical conditions culminated in the creation of water.

Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were one closed-up mass ; then We opened up this mass and We made all living things with water ? And We made great mountains in the earth lest it might be convulsed with them and We have made in it wide ways that they may follow right direction (xxi. 30-31).

That life on this earth became possible with the emergence of water is also given in another verse which adds to this statement the course of animal evolution from marine animals, fishes and reptiles to animals with two or four legs (xxiv. 45).

It would not be stretching the meaning of this

verse too much if we derive a cosmogony from it. It is clearly given here that the universe of galaxies, stars and planets for which collectively the term "heavens" is used was one conglomerate before the earth and stars were separated and then because man is mainly concerned with the earth, the beginning of life on this planet is attributed to the stage when chemical action caused the emergence of water. It is given also in another verse in the Qur'an that water is the source of all organic life (xxv. 54). Then it is said that the crust of the earth became firm and stabilised. Mountains being the most solid and gigantic masses on this crust, they are specially mentioned (xxi. 31) in connection with this stabilisation which made routes and paths possible. No paths were possible for lower animals and later on for man in a fluid mass, subject to haphazard movements and convulsions. There could be no guidance on the right paths until firstly the paths became possible.

About the creation of the heavens and the earth the Qur'an (xli. 9-10) repeats the teaching of the Old Testament that they were created in six days. What does this mean? Days, as we count them, result from the motion of the earth round its own axis and its revolution round the sun. How could there be any days before the creation of the solar system. When astronomy and geology extended space and time to staggering dimensions, the theologians of the West got disturbed because of an apparent contradiction between the account given in the Genesis and the irrefutable discoveries of science. But the reader of the Qur'an need not be disturbed because it gives the clarification in other places that time with God is not the same as with human beings. "The day with God is a hundred thousand years according to your counting" (xxii. 47). It may be noted here that these figures are not meant to convey any mathematical exactness. They are literary expressions denoting only a long period. The number seven is used in numerous

literary expressions like seven heavens and seven seas. A famous brand of cod liver oil is called "Seven Seas" which means only this that this oil is extracted from the cod fish found in very many seas. Seven strata of Paradise and seven strata of Hell are also meant to denote that there are very many types of bliss and a great variety of pains and punishments. It is said in the Qur'an (ii. 117; xvi. 40) that when God wills to create a thing, it comes into existence with a fiat that takes no time. Why should then the Almighty Creator take six days, meaning two astronomically long epochs, to bring into existence heavenly bodies and the earth? It means only this that the law of graduation is a Divine law. Nothing comes into existence before a previously conditioning process is complete; the law of causation which rules entire existence is a law of graduation. Duration varies in different types of beings from moments to ions.

Another proper term for evolution would be "ascent" because evolution means development or ascent from one stage to another. It is noteworthy that the Qur'an calls God the Lord of the ways of ascent. The nature of the angels or God's spiritual agencies is not clearly understood by man, nor do we know the exact significance of what is called Spirit. God is a Spirit and so is man, although the nature of these spirits could not be identical in every respect; the Creative Spirit and the created spirits could not be the same in spite of some likeness. The Book says that the law of duration and graduation for the accomplishment of a purpose is a universal law which holds good also in the realm of the spirit. The spiritual agencies also take a very long time in their process of ascent towards God which, according to the Qur'an, is the goal of all creation. A Sūrah in the Qur'an (lxx.) is named "al-Ma'ārij" which means the Ways of Ascent. In waiting for results man is asked to be patient because neither God nor His spiritual agencies are in a hurry. Hurry and impatience are given as the characteristic of man.

From Allah, the Lord of the ways of ascent : to Him ascend the angels and the Spirit in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. Therefore, endure with a goodly patience (lxv. 3-4).

Let us now turn to the creation of man and see if what we find in the Book could tally with the findings of science. It is said that man's remotest ancestry is blackish mud. He did not drop on this earth from any supra-physical heaven. The Qur'an reminds us that we originated in this earth.

And certainly We created Man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape (xv. 26).

The Spirit of the Lord was breathed into him when he had physically attained to organic perfection. It was only after this that the spiritual forces could be made to submit to him because of his knowledge which would become a cosmic power.

Addressing the angels God says: "When I have made him complete and breathed into him My spirit, then make obeisance to him" (xv. 29).

The story of the creation of man is a legend of very deep import. The variation in the Qur'anic version from the account of the Old Testament is meant to convey the gift of Islamic ideology about the nature of man. The Qur'an has transformed the old legend of the Fall of Man into a doctrine of the Rise of Man. The cosmic forces object to the creation of man because it is proposed to grant him free will which he is bound to misuse by forgetting God and shedding blood. This risky gift of free will was offered to the rest of the creation and was refused because of its tremendous risks, but man stepped in where angels had feared to tread. The movement from Nature, which has not the capacity to violate any law, and the ascent from instinct, which acts so unerringly in the meanest of worms, to intellect which shall have to grope for truth and suffer the penalties of ignorance was surely replete with dangers. But the Creator Who wanted a new

species to emerge had full confidence in the ultimate destiny of man who, through knowledge, will conquer ignorance and, using his liberty aright, will ultimately attune his will to the will of God. The Qur'ān makes only a passing mention of the Fall, an act of disobedience which will be the first demonstration of liberty, but man by turning towards God will not only wipe away the evil effects of this deviation but, because of his repentance and because of the knowledge granted to him which even the angels do not possess, will constantly ascend to great heights. The Christian version said that man fell because the devil tempted Eve and Eve misled Adam to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. The Qur'ān was giving only a symbolic version; therefore, it did not specify the nature of man's first disobedience. It says whatever the wrong was, the consciousness of deviating from the right path was the awakening of moral consciousness which, along with the gift of freedom and intellect, completes the spiritual endowment of man. Then the Qur'ānic version removed the unjustified stigma from womanhood by saying that whatever the nature of this sin was, man and woman were equally to blame for it. They sinned together, repented together, and were exalted together above the angels. The Qur'ānic version presents Adam not as an individual but as humanity in its essential and ideal aspects.

And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam. So they did obeisance except Iblis; he was not one of those who did obeisance (ii. 34).

Here all humanity is addressed and Adam is made to symbolise the whole of humanity. While describing the descent of man into the world of moral responsibility, the addressee is apparently Adam, yet in the very next verse he is identified with the whole of humanity.

Then Adam received words from His Lord, so He turned to him mercifully; surely He is Forgiving, the Merciful.

We said: Go forth from this state all. Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve (ii. 37-38).

Knowledge, free will and moral sense with the assurance that deviation shall be forgiven on a sincere repentance, God made man the most dignified of creatures.

And surely We have dignified the children of Adam; and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things and We have made them to excel by a high degree of excellence most of those whom We have created (xvii. 70).

In dealing with man from the point of view of evolution we have to look backward as well as forward; we have to see what the Qur'an says about his "whence" and his "whither". Adam's constitution physically was made out of this earth, but was he moulded out of the black mud as one would make a model of clay or did his constitution take long ages to reach its present form which is the most developed of all the organic forms on this earth? No rationalist would be prepared to believe in this kind of creation as a potter makes his pots and vessels. The Qur'an gives us a hint that after having originated in clay a specified term had to elapse before man could assume his present shape. The knowledge of that specified term is with God but men dispute about it.

He it is Who created you from clay, then He decreed a term: in His knowledge a definite term, but you being in doubt dispute about it (vi. 2).

This means that the term required for man to reach his present shape starting from mud is a matter of speculation, but he could know this for certain that it was a long duration.

There is a saying of the Prophet which is quoted by the great evolutionary thinker of Islam, Jalāluddīn Rūmī, that it took forty days to knead the clay from

which Adam had to be moulded and when we remember that the day with God means an enormous stretch of time we know that the Prophet too believed that man was not created by a single fiat but was a product of a long course of development. Rūmī has elaborated the hints of the Qur'ān and this saying of the Prophet into a speculative philosophy about the creation and evolution of man. He says: "For an enormously long time I existed like the atoms that are whirled about in space without a will; then, it took me very long to develop organic life, first as an animal and then as man. Life for me has been a perpetual process of self-transcendence and on my dead self's stepping stones I have been rising higher and higher in the scale of existence." He adds: "Why should life be afraid of death which has always proved to be a gateway to a higher and better existence? The process shall continue till, after having shed all limitations of the categories of phenomenal existence, I reach the Life Divine in which my self shall be so attuned to the infinite that it becomes indistinguishable."

The development of physical sciences during the last three centuries made man aware of the infinities of time and space and the infinity of the physical universe in every aspect. The vision of ancient theologies was narrow and limited because their view of creation was limited. Most of the theologians believed that the act of creation dated back to about six thousand years and will come to an end very soon. Their vision was also vitiated by the dualism of mind and matter or the spirit and the flesh. The dualism of the heaven and the earth was also imported in these theologies from Greek thought, according to which heavenly bodies were abodes of the gods or were gods themselves. They were more orderly than our earth and its phenomena; they were the realms of light and our earth the realm of darkness. The Qur'ān does not teach dualism of any kind because existence basically is unity as its Creator is one. This unity creates and comprehends infinite

variety because the potentialities of being are infinite, but there is a basic continuity in all existence. Science opened up vast vistas for man's intellect and imagination and made man conscious of the infinities of life. It restored to man that sense of wonder which, according to Plato, is the beginning of philosophy. The Qur'an had pointed to the infinity and continuity of existence before scientific progress established it.

And were every tree that is in the earth made into pens and the sea to supply it with ink, with seven more seas to increase it, the words of Allah would not come to an end ; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise (xxxi. 27).

Words of Allah in this verse as elsewhere in the Qur'an mean expressions of God's creative will. The Qur'an calls Jesus the Word of Allah in this sense. The inexhaustibility of the manifestations as well as the potentialities of God-created Nature make the process of human discovery also eternal. However much existence may manifest, and however much man may comprehend it, Nature's uncomprehended infinity will still be there. Then the Qur'an teaches that all existence has a continuity without gaps. The inorganic passes over to the organic and the organic evolves into the mental without gaps and breaks. The heavenly bodies are linked one to another by eternal and universal laws.

Do they not look at the heaven above them ?—how We have made it and adorned it and it has no gaps (l. 6).

According to Darwin, evolution of species became possible through three factors—chance, variations and natural selection, leading to the survival of the fittest. Neither science nor religion believes in mere chance. Darwin could find no explanation for variations and so relegated them to chance, but it is true that all development proceeds by selection. When any factor ceases to have a survival value, it becomes extinct and a new factor that can sustain and support life in

the changed environment gets established. The Qur'ān is very explicit about it :

He sends down water from the clouds, then water-courses flow according to their measures and the torrent bears along the swelling foam. And from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments, or things of utility, arises a scum like it. Thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood ; then as for the scum it passes away as a worthless thing, and as for that which profits the people it tarries in the earth ; thus does Allah set forth parables (xiii. 17).

One example is taken from physical nature and the other from art to show that the law of natural selection works in both. As art is selective, so is Nature. Foam has only a semblance of water ; it could not quench the thirst of the earth to make it grow any vegetation nor the thirst of animals or man, so it vanishes or is thrust aside and useful life-giving water is retained. Similarly, in the melting of metals and alloys a scum is thrown up, but being of no use it is discarded and pure metal is retained. Nature as well as art is governed by the law of utility. One can conclude from this that entire evolution has proceeded on this principle. In any further development of any phase of life man must proceed on this basis. The test of the truth or goodness of any idea is its capacity to benefit life. The Qur'ān has enunciated this principle in assessing the laws or rules of life that have governed human groups in the past. Even divinely-revealed laws have been subject to change when circumstances demanded their replacement by some new laws or customs. So, according to the Qur'ān, Revelation has been progressive. The word *āyat* is used in the Qur'ān for natural phenomena besides its common meaning of a verse in the Qur'ān or in any other revealed book. There is a verse in the Qur'ān which enunciates a general principle about abrogation (ii. 106). The commentators generally confine its application to the abrogation of certain laws and rules found in the revealed books before the Qur'ān or the abrogation of some verses in the revelation of the

Qur'ān itself. We will not enter into the discussion whether or not there are some verses in the Qur'ān itself which were later on abrogated by some other verses which replaced them or whether the verse refers to pre-Qur'ānic revelations only. We think that the principle enunciated has a very broad and universal application. It is the principle according to which all Nature as well as all history has proceeded, and is summed up in this verse:

Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? (ii. 106).

Who can deny that this law holds good in the biological realm where more adaptable species having better survival value have been replacing the ones that had lost their fitness. The advance from amoeba to man has been made according to this principle and the fossils of extinct species are irrefutable witness to it. Similar has been the story of cultures. Every mode of thought and life embodied in beliefs, customs and laws had some value in a particular biological and social setting. But changing life demanded changing laws because Time makes ancient good uncouth. Tennyson has given the reason for this abrogation succinctly in a very appealing manner, in his famous lines in "King Arthur": "Old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfils himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world." So all healthy change even in previous revelations does not falsify but establishes the Divine order on a perpetually progressive basis.

And when We change one communication for another—and Allah knows best what He reveals—they say: You are only a forger. Nay, most of them do not know (xvi. 101).

This verse refers to some changes in laws and customs which the Qur'ānic revelation promulgated so that life should break through old shells.

The Jews and Christians who were in possession

of revealed truths called Muhammad an impostor and a forger because he said : God demands now some changes so that the Spirit of Truth and Justice may embody itself now in fresh moulds. The best part of the Old Testament is the story of the struggle between the priest and the prophet. The priests constantly had the tendency to reduce religion to legalism, ritualism and sacerdotalism. It was the worship of the form to the neglect of the spirit. It has been beautifully put in the New Testament that the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life. Many a prophet was martyred because he called men back to hark to the spirit and lay less emphasis on forms, laws and rituals which were originally means but gradually had become ends in themselves. The greatest of these martyrs was Jesus Christ who was considered to be the greatest threat to legalistic and ritualistic Judaism for which the observance of the Sabbath, the violation of which made a man liable to the penalty of death, was of greater importance than Truth, Love and Justice. When Jesus was seen disregarding the rigorous observance of it, he was considered to be a dangerous rebel, because the observance of the Sabbath had become the chief pillar of legalistic Judaism. How pregnant with life-giving truth is the utterance of Jesus that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, which could be easily amplified into the eternal principle of the relation of laws and customs and rituals to the realities of human life. Only the principle of creative love is eternal ; the laws into which love embodies itself in a particular situation should be modified when the deepening and broadening of life demand it. By the time of the advent of Islam Jewish and Christian dogmas and laws had been rigid and fossilised ; instead of advancing life they were retarding it. Professed and practised Christianity had changed the religion of love into a system of intolerance and persecution, and Christians had fallen into the very pit from which Jesus had sought humanity to be pulled



ing to Being or, in a somewhat different formulation, the relation of the One to the Many, is as old as philosophy. Parmenides said : Being is real and Becoming is illusory, and Being being eternally the same or static all motion is illusory. Heraclitus went to the other extreme and said : Change is real and Permanence is illusory. Plato tried to effect a compromise between the two by asserting that there is a Realm of Being, the Realm of Eternal Ideas, which is true, real and eternal, and the Realm of Becoming has a secondary reality, it being partially real and partially unreal and evanescent ; it is real only to the extent that it participates in an eternal idea. Neither Science nor Philosophy nor Religion can avoid facing this problem ; all the three in their own manner have to offer an answer.

Let us see what is the answer of Islam. It says, ever since humanity has awakened to the idea of a Creator Who is Omnipotent and Omniscient, whenever men have been conscious of it, true religion has emerged and remained the same in essence. It also says that God-consciousness evolved after a process of thinking as in the case of Abraham, the story of whose evolution of God-consciousness is given in the Qur'an which is the story of the God-consciousness of humanity itself. Humanity must have passed through the stages of belief through which passed Abraham, probably the first great prophet who pulled the idolatrous polytheistic Israelites out of Nature-worship.

And thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he might be of those who have a certainty of faith. So when the night overshadowed him he saw a star. He said : This is my Lord, but when it set he said : I do not love the setting ones. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said : This is my Lord. But when the moon also set, he said : If my Lord had not guided me I should certainly be of the erring ones. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said : This is my Lord ; he is the greatest. But when the sun also set, he said : O people, I will not associate other and false gods with whom you associate the one great Creator of the heavens and the earth ; towards Him only I turn my face with singlemindedness, and I am not of the polytheists (vi. 76-80).

With the worship of gods, which was common in the early stages of human culture, an idea of sacrifice was associated; the greater the value of the object sacrificed, the greater was the benefit expected. In some communities it was the most beautiful young boy or young girl who was sacrificed by killing or drowning as it was done in Egypt. Sacrifice of the animals remained for long centuries the chief religious observance of the Jews. The altars originally were the places in the temples where the sacrificial animals were killed. In the temple of Solomon, too, which was completely destroyed more than once the central place was the rock-altar which survives to this day, over which the great Dome of the Rock was erected by an Umayyad Caliph. From the story of Abraham given in the Old Testament as well as the Qur'an, it appears that till his time human sacrifice was still prevalent among the polytheistic people among whom Abraham arose to present an exalted idea of a just and merciful God Who abhorred human sacrifice. As Abraham overcame the polytheistic creed advancing to the idea of one Creator God by degrees, so about the attributes of God too there is evident a development towards the idea of a merciful God. In the evolution of religion mere monotheism is not enough; a religion does not become spiritual until the idea of Divine Love and Mercy does not predominate. Even when Abraham had become a believer in one God, the primitive belief that gods demand human sacrifice emerged in his dreams as psychologically suppressed desires and urges and what Jung calls the racial Unconscious crop up in dreams. Abraham dreamt that the One True God Whom he now worshipped wanted him to sacrifice his dear son to Him. Surely the great good God could not have made such a cruel demand even to test the loyalty of Abraham. His dream was not of a Divine origin; it was the old religion still lurking in the hiding places of the subconscious mind that created this dream which Abraham mistakenly interpreted to

be the demand of the One God to Whom he owed unconditional obedience. He actually prepared himself to obey what he thought to be a Divine command and the obedient son too consented for the supreme sacrifice. Then Abraham's higher consciousness awakened and an animal was substituted for the dear son. From human sacrifice to animal sacrifice was a great forward step in the spiritualising of religion, and this step also we owe to Abraham, the first great prophet to be truly enlightened about the unity and the spiritual attributes of God. It is on account of the consummation of Abraham's monotheistic creed that in the Qur'ānic revelation Muḥammad is made to say that he follows in the footsteps of Abraham, the first of the great Muslims. The Jews wanted Muḥammad to be hundred per cent Jew and the Christians wanted him to subscribe to all the tenets of dogmatic Christianity, viz. Trinity, Incarnation, Original Sin and Atonement. The Qur'ān exhorts Muḥammad to tell these people: "I follow Abraham who was neither a Jew nor a Christian." Judaism and dogmatic Christianity emerged long after him perverting the pure monotheism of Abraham. All the great Israelite prophets were constantly and vehemently protesting against that Judaism of the priests which had divorced religion from morality.

In the story of Abraham we find another phase of his developing consciousness about spiritual realities. Belief in a good God, philosophically speaking, is a belief in the conservation of values. God is the locus and a guarantor of all values which are human and Divine at the same time. If God, the originator and sustainer of all values, does not exist, then all values become ephemeral illusions, the products of human emotions and wishful thinking. The development of these values is the guiding star of human personality. But of what use will all this effort be if human personality does not survive after death. Religion would be a mockery if there is no survival of the ego. Belief in God, free-

dom of the will and survival or immortality are the three great pillars of a spiritual religion.

Having attained to the idea of a Good and Eternal God, Abraham also came to believe in survival, but he could not grasp it intellectually. The belief in survival among the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims in general is a belief in body-mind resurrection. The human mind at a less advanced stage cannot separate the spirit from its physical associate, the body ; disembodied spirits are not conceivable. It is only the philosophers and mystics and the believing intellectuals who feel neither the possibility nor the necessity of picking up the physical atoms of a dead and defunct body scattered to the winds, to reconstruct it at the time of resurrection, to enjoy the rewards or suffer the punishments of deeds done in this world. If the prophets of ancient religion had told the materialistically-minded primitive man that he may survive without this body being reconstructed and resurrected, he would not have believed, and this kind of airy immortality would not have satisfied him.

The essential factor in this belief is survival after the dissolution of the body by physical death.

Life is real, life is earnest
 And the grave is not its goal ;
 Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
 Was not spoken of the soul.

Bodily resurrection, if believed literally, would involve innumerable difficulties and anomalies. The body here in this world is after all the instrument of the soul and the medium of its adaptation to a physical environment. To believe in physical resurrection would imply that existence has no other dimensions than the three-dimensional space with serial time as the fourth dimension filled with events of material mass and energy. This physical world is a field of activity for the soul which, even while acting in a material medium through a physical medium, belongs to a non-spatial

and non-temporal realm. Psychological processes are something *sui generis* and distinct from physical processes, whether within or without the body. There may be parallelism or interaction between brain processes and their psychological concomitants, but they cannot be identified with physical processes. The idea of length is not long and the idea of matter is not material. The perception of an object is not the object itself. As vital processes belong to a category that is distinct from non-purposive mechanism, so with a much greater difference psychical processes are not a mere duplication of vital or material processes. Man is essentially mind or soul mysteriously related to its bodily instrument and the physical environment. Deeper religious consciousness and spiritual experience of the saints and mystics of all spiritual religions have borne testimony to the fact that the realm of the spirit is suprasensual and supra-intellectual, and hence describing a spiritual experience of the highest order they have touched a dimension of being which cannot be described in terms of matter or reason. The Life Divine in which the soul is destined to live and move and have its being is not a physical life lived over again with greater refinement and superior satisfaction. Existence would be an extremely poor affair if it had no other dimension than the physical world of space, time and matter.

Man in the Qur'ān is described and addressed as mind or as soul : he is called *Nafs*. All that is experienced by him is experienced as a soul ; the bliss as well as the pain is felt by the soul though it may have bodily accompaniments. If body is the medium and instrument of a non-physical entity and the soul at any stage which is supra-physical has to engage in some activity, then whatever that medium may be, one might call it the body of the soul at that stage. But in a spiritual condition which has nothing to do with matter or three-dimensional space, its suitable medium or its body could not be the same which it adopted in the lower physical realm. Those who believe in bodily resurrec-

tion must get involved in further difficulties. Some die in infancy, others in youth and many more in decrepit old age; some carry to the grave germs of disease. If bodies are resurrected as they were at the time of death, they will be carrying over all these states in the next world. The infant and the old man must retain there in the next world their infancy and old age, or they should all become young; but this conversion shall have altered their bodies. But if the next world necessitates alteration of bodies, why not accept a more radical alteration into bodies and shapes that are required by their new state where physical necessities of the mundane realm have ceased to have any meaning or utility.

RELIGION AND SYMBOLISM

HEGEL considered philosophy to be higher than religion because philosophy uses concepts which give a clearer presentation of truth than religion which presents truth in the garb of symbols. The language of religion is the language of imagination which, according to an intellectual like Hegel, stands lower than logical reason. This statement of Hegel is a product of the intellectual bias which takes no account of feelings and emotions except as disturbing factors which should be stoically suppressed so that the pure light of reason may not be dimmed. The poets and the artists in general could never accept the superiority of logical reason over feeling. Who could be a greater intellectualist than Plato for whom the Realm of Reality was the Realm of Eternal Ideas and for whom, like his teacher Socrates, dialectic was the best instrument to reach the truth. But Plato had also a good deal of the poet in him and his imagination does not appear to be less powerful than his intellect. To bring home his essential teaching, he freely uses myths, symbols, similes, metaphors and allegories which have created a problem for his commentators. Did he believe in the reality of these myths or was he using them as literary media of expression? He proposed to expunge from Homer the immoral gods and their exploits and retain only the noble ones, but the question is: Did he believe in their existence anywhere in the realm of reality? Plato's *Dialogues* are full of poetic symbols, although his aim was to lead the reader to the realm of ideas where sense symbolism

would have no meaning, the world of senses being unreal according to his metaphysics. The example of Plato is a convincing proof of the fact that dry dialectic cannot penetrate the human mind without assistance from sense symbolism which is reinforced by the imaginative faculty. The philosopher-poet Iqbal, who was in a position to compare philosophy with poetry, says that truth comprehended without feeling and expressed without emotion and pathos becomes philosophy, but touched with emotion becomes poetry. Truth as veiled Beauty was pursued by the philosopher Ibn Sīnā and the mystic poet Rūmī; the philosopher's vision was dimmed by the dust raised by the speeding camel that was carrying the veiled beauty, but the poet overtaking the camel succeeded in raising the veil. Intense Love with its creative imagination has a greater chance of diving into the ineffable mystery of life than the endless spinning of syllogisms. Imagination is the eye of the soul. Shelley considered imagination to be the great instrument of the moral good and Wordsworth praised imagination as the mightiest lever known to the moral world. Religion is decried by the rationalists as a product of the human imagination, and hence a web of illusions woven by man's wishful thinking. The language of religion is more akin to poetry than to prose and, therefore, in their most vivid and edifying utterances some poets rise to the strains of prophethood and some prophets appear to be poets. Truths expressed emotionally tend not only to be clothed in symbols and similes but spontaneously generate rhyme, rhythm and melodious expression. If Muhammad were not a prophet fired by a great mission, some verses of the Qur'ān could have been taken only as great poetry. But the great Revealer of Truth warned people not to take him for a poet because he never learnt this art nor practised it as art. The Qur'ān says that there is a world of difference between a mere poet and a prophet. The poet wanders aimlessly in all the valleys of life giving expression to his impressions; the actions

of the poet generally do not conform to his words while the distinguishing characteristic of a prophet is the complete concord between his words and deeds and, therefore, those who follow a mere poet are apt to go astray.

But imagination, the chief faculty that creates myths, symbols and similes, varies with different types of minds. There is scientific imagination about which the great scientific genius of the modern age, Albert Einstein, said that it is more important than knowledge. In all the great scientific discoveries, imagination led the way ; it was ahead of verification and demonstration. It is this type of imagination that soars in the undiscovered universe of possibilities. From the fall of the apple it inspires a Newton with the vision of cosmic gravitation. As Emily Dickenson puts it :

To make a prairie, it takes a clover and one bee—
And revery,
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

Scientific pursuit is an attempt to move from the particulars to the general by experiment or by induction or by imagination which suggests tentatively a hypothesis. Imagination exercised by the artist and the poet is of a different variety. Then we have imagination which issues into reveries and day-dreams. There is also the constructive imagination of a great man of action who visualises the completion of an achievement before even the rudiments of it are in existence. Imagination by itself is morally neutral ; it may be fair as well as foul ; it may be a guide to truth or a will-o'-the-wisp ; it may be a mere mirage giving a false promise of water ; or it may lead a man truly towards perennial springs.

Now let us come to our proper topic and try to understand the roll of imagination in the expression and elucidation of moral and spiritual truths.

Let us start with the concept of God. The followers

of all monotheistic religions profess belief in the existence of God and also His attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, love, mercy and justice. But whoever tries to be precise about the nature of His existence or His attributes finds himself facing paradoxes, anomalies and dilemmas ; intellectually it is a riddle wrapped in a mystery. To start with the most general category of being or existence one cannot conceive God even as existing because existence applies primarily only to things or their attributes. Things, qualities or processes exist either both in time and space or in time only like mental processes, and the category of causation covers all that exists. God cannot be conceived as a cause because we cannot conceive any uncaused cause. He cannot exist in time or space because if God is the Creator, time as well as space are His creations ; He could not be contained in them nor could He be subject to their limitations. If neither time nor space nor causation applies to Him, how could we say that He exists in any sense in which existence could be conceivable for us ? Does He possess attributes ; if so, are they co-eternal with Him, inseparable from His essence or relative to His creation ? How could He be a Creator unless there be some creation ? So to be a Creator He becomes dependent on His Creation. But theism of the Islamic type teaches that all things depend on Him and He does not depend on anything. Similarly, to manifest His love or mercy there must be there eternally with Him some creation on whom this quality may be exercised. Is He conscious ? It is impossible for us to conceive Him as conscious because consciousness for us is always consciousness of something other than itself. If He is the Eternally Real, where does this other-than-Him come from ? Is He immanent in His creation or does He transcend it ? If He is immanent, is He co-eval or co-existent with His entire creation or identical with it including all its aspects, high and low, good and evil, the permanent and the transitory ? If He is transcendent, the universe becomes something other

than Him and in a sense alien to Him facing Him as the other, as something outside of Him, thereby limiting Him. Can personality be attributed to Him or is He impersonal like the forces of physical nature which are neither personal nor respecter of persons? If We call Him personal, we can conceive of Him on the analogy of human personality alone. But human personality is a product of environment and develops by the harmonising of conflicting human urges. Personality owes its being to a society of persons; its origins are social and psychological. It is a product of limitations and would be annihilated if all limitations imposed by the environment and the interrelation of persons are completely transcended. Does He see or does He hear?—but seeing and hearing are connected with sense-organs which are only biological instruments and could not be ascribed to God. All logic and all psychology would lead one to utter agnosticism or negative theology which comes to the conclusion that God can be defined only negatively; God is neither this nor that, nor anything that the human mind can possibly conceive. But no positive religion can be based on a merely negative theology which is indistinguishable from scepticism for all intellectual or moral purposes.

Indian philosophy and religion followed that route either intellectually or mystically and ended in the *Nirgun Vedanta* of Shankara or the godless *Nirvana* of Buddhism. Religious consciousness of India combined polytheism with the pantheism of the Upanishads, but could never develop a satisfying theistic outlook. According to the great Indian scholar, Dr Tara Chand, theistic movements in India were mainly the product of the impact of Islam on the Hindu religious consciousness. Modern theistic movements like the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj are considered to be inconsistent with orthodox Hindu religion and philosophy, and so ancient polytheism combined with mystical mind. Buddhism, consistent with its ontology and epistemology, makes no direct reference to a creator

Providence that lives and loves and sustains a purposeful creation in which all life is a goal-seeking activity and the purpose of life is the realisation of God's purposes. Buddhism is nothing but logic and psychology pushed consistently to the extreme, combined with a mystical consciousness of *Nirvana* in which no category of life or existence holds good. In this outlook all gods become phenomenal as they became part of a cosmic *Maya* in *Advait Vedanta*. There could not be any question of retaining one Creator God because, creation being phenomenal or illusory, the creator of this cosmic illusion too is a part of that illusion. Some great Buddhistic scholars relate about Buddha that when questioned about the existence of God he replied that those who say He exists are wrong and those who say He does not exist are equally wrong. God cannot be defined logically because, as Spinoza puts it, all definition is limitation. Logical definition consists of genus plus *differentia*, according to the classical Aristotelean logic. Aristotle could not define God consistent with his logic, so he plunged into his metaphysics calling God Pure Form, Pure Idea or Pure Reason in Whom Reason or Consciousness is its own object. Like Plato's "The Good" He is the culminating point of a pyramid of ideas or the highest *Entelechy*. He is the Prime Mover Who moves without Will because volition cannot be attributed to Him. Will strives for that which is not, so how could there be any Will in a self-sufficient God for Whom nothing truly Real is unrealised? Plato's Demiurge or Creator God is a lesser reality because the Real is "The Good," an Eternal Reality which is imperfectly reflected in the changing and phenomenal existence but, as near Aristotle, God has no will to create.

The difficulty or impossibility of conceiving God Who cannot become a percept or a concept led to incarnational creeds in which the transcendent Reality assumes a body of flesh and blood and descends or condescends to the human level to reveal the God Who

could not otherwise be revealed or conceived. Most of the Hindu creeds along with Christianity stick to the belief in incarnation, and Buddha too has become an Incarnation of the Transcendental Real. Human consciousness which is rooted in the body and cannot help becoming anthropomorphic and anthropopathic is thereby satisfied.

After this brief survey of some major religions and philosophies, let us turn to Islam and see how it conceives God.

(1) God is the Ultimate Reality—the Beginning and the End, the Wise, the Merciful, the Sustaining Power of all existence.

(2) He is neither the completely unknowable nor the completely known. He is partially knowable through His creation by the exercise of right reason.

(3) He is not a person or object or being that could be seen by the eyes, although "He sees the eyes" (vi. 103).

(4) He is neither temporal nor spatial nor sensible nor intelligible. His being is ultrarational but not contrary to reason.

The Qur'an presents God in human as well as impersonal terms, but the underlying idea is that neither His essence nor His attributes can be described except in symbols and similes. By His knowledge and His

superior power and not of any ratiocination. People begin to believe in God because they believe in the sincerity, sanity and impeccable integrity of these gifted souls. The third avenue of approach to God is man's unadulterated reason which leads to the inevitable conclusion both logically and empirically that a being must necessarily exist to make life and existence comprehensible.

But whether it is direct revelation or faith or reason, any description of God and His attributes can only be symbolical. Sometimes He is called a Father though, in a human sense, He could not be literally and really like a human father. He could, perhaps, with greater propriety, be called a mother because the function of the mother with respect to the creating, sustaining and rearing of a child is more intimate and more vital. He is also called Lord or Master which again is only a symbol and a pointer. Man has gone on creating likenesses and similes for God ; some of them may be helpful and edifying, but a good deal of bad religion is the outcome of taking the symbol for the reality which is the origin of a good deal of mythology and superstition. Take, for instance, the symbol of Light used by Neoplatonism for the Ultimate and Ineffable Reality. All Neoplatonic metaphysics which influenced to a considerable extent Christian as well as Islamic mysticism is derived from taking this symbol for an eternal fact of all Reality. From the One as the sun and source of all existence manifestations begin to emanate. The One being what it is cannot help pouring out its essence, as the sun cannot help disseminating heat and light. In the first stage of emanation the World-Mind comes into being, which you might call Universal Reason. Being nearest to the source of light, it is the most enlightened. After this the next manifestation or emanation is the World-Soul which has emotional drives and appetites, senses and imagination. All plant and animal life in which the Light or Reality is much weaker than in the World-Mind is a

product of the World-Soul. The light here is weaker because it is more distant from the Central Sun. In the process of spreading further and further and actualising the many forms of existence, reality approaches at last the exhaustion of logical possibilities. As it approaches this end, the light of reality fades more and more until it comes at last to nothingness or complete darkness. The material world is the realm of this non-being or utter darkness. It was this attitude towards matter and flesh that resulted in the life-negating asceticism.

Even a cursory glance on systems of metaphysics would reveal the fact that, although they profess to be systems of thought, they are ultimately based on some picture of the Ultimate Reality, and so the relation between symbol and Reality becomes the most fundamental problem. Human mind is compelled to express its view of Reality in symbols because Reality has no language of its own as distinct from the language that man has invented to express human relations or the relation of man to his environment or the relation of material things and objects among themselves. Man is a citizen of two worlds—the world of material objects and the world of the spirit. Language, as we know it, was invented as an instrument of biological and physical necessities. The mind even at the intellectual level is compelled to use physical terms to express mental facts. We talk of the breadth of mind or its narrowness, the depth of thought or feeling or the height of folly. Entire psychology, not possessing any language of its own, uses material or spatial terms, although in the ideational realm there is no question of space. The subconscious mind is visualised as a dark underground cellar or as a storehouse, and there is the Freudian censor sitting as a guard to prevent the passage of undesirable and repressed ideas into the upper floor of consciousness unless they be disguised in symbols that require a difficult process of psychoanalytical probing to reveal the reality that they

represent. It is not only religion that uses symbolism ; even ordinary psychology cannot do without it. Human mind uses symbols consciously as well as unconsciously. It is a curious and interesting fact that every religion uses derogatory terms for the symbolism of other religions calling it mythology, but its own symbolism it believes to be identical with Reality itself. Take, for instance, the gods of old religions ; they were the products of human imagination which personified the powers of Nature or symbolised human hopes and fears. With the rise of monotheism and spiritual religions they gradually faded into nothingness and were replaced by angels which were spiritual agencies carrying out God's purposes. As birds are freer in their movements and are capable of flying with great speed in the atmosphere of which the sky seems to be the limit, the angels were visualised and symbolised as birds with wings. We have in the New Testament the Holy Ghost descending in the shape of a dove and the symbolism of wings for the angels is also used in the Qur'ān. Now the ordinary believer in these religions considers the gods as products of the personifying mythological imagination but the angels with wings as real in the literal sense. The Qur'ān inculcates belief in angels as part of the faith. Naturalistic rationalism would advise us to let the angels go the way of the gods of polytheistic creeds as the products of human imagination without any reality. But if angels are conceived as forces operating in existence for the good or manifestations of Reason working in Nature and man's spiritual experiences, this belief follows as a corollary from the belief in a Creator God Who is rational and beneficent and Whose guidance is manifested in the growth of plants, in the instincts of animals which appear so miraculous, and in the physical experiences of man whose validity tested by the objectivity of results cannot be repudiated by any canons by which we judge a thing to be real. The forces that keep the planets in their orbits are the forces

of order without which heavenly bodies and our earth would relapse into chaos. These forces are considered as physical and mathematical because they follow with precision the laws of matter and motion. For theism the manifestation may be physical but the ground is spiritual because the spirit is the creator of harmonies. Conceived in this manner all existence is saturated with angels. Such is the view expressed by the philosopher-mystic Rūmī in his book *Fīhi Mā Fīhi*, wherein he says that angels are nothing but the powers of the Universal Reason shaped by imagination as birds with wings. He says if birds were moulded out of wax and then the wax melted, again there would be nothing there but wax, because the birds were only temporary and evanescent appearances. He says : Similarly if you want to get back to the original nature of the angels you shall have to dissolve their wings and recover the Universal Reason of which they were the appearances.

For the expression of deep emotions and subtle sentiments and for the expression of haunting ideas and even thought at its highest, where the common language of utilitarian existence fails to embody it in simple prose, human expression becomes instinctively poetical. Deep sorrow or ecstatic joy have no other language but the language of poetry—symbols, metaphors, similes and allegories. The language of imagination is not manufactured deliberately and consciously. Ideas and experiences that stir the human soul at the subconscious level or suprarational and suprasensual intuitions or adumbrations clothe themselves automatically in symbols. The revelations of the saint or the prophet, though real in the sense that they spring from a deeper and a higher level of reality and originate in another dimension of being, assume a symbolic or dramatic shape at the level of the human psyche. For the prophet Reality does not embody itself in syllogisms but in pictures. The language of the subconscious and the superconscious is the language of

the drama. For the great mystics even physical nature is symbolic ; everything is the objectification of some suprasensual meaning, because the realm of spirit is comparatively more real in the realm of meaning and ideals that assume transitory shapes in which they are only inadequately expressed. The ideal is never completely materialised or actualised in the realm of appearance and change.

Tennyson was a man of deep mystical experiences which he has tried to formulate into verse in two poems. He says that by pronouncing his own name and addressing himself he plunged into a state of consciousness wherein there was infinite knowledge and infinite bliss of such a transcendent and ineffable kind that human language and mode of understanding fail to grasp or express it. Giving a reason for this helplessness he says that words are shadows of things and things themselves are only shadows of reality ; so words that are shadows of shadows are twice removed from the Real. Plato's allegory of the Cave wherein a person is sitting with his back towards the world of things and sees only the phantasmagoric of shadows cast on the wall in front of him, compels the viewer to take the shadows for the real things. He is debarred by his position from seeing the things that cast these shadows ; therefore, shadows become the only realities for him. A shadow, however, is not completely unreal ; it is an incomplete appearance of a reality ; it is something real that it is reflected there. For Plato such is the nature of the sensible world. The absolutes of the ideal are inadequately symbolised by the relativities of the actual.

Symbols for the supramundane realities may be formulated automatically and involuntarily by the dramatic activity of the subconscious or the superconscious, or they may be the result of a deliberate attempt to express spiritual truths in concrete pictures to make them partially comprehensible to human minds that have not been gifted with a higher vision.

The mystic poet Jalal-ud-Din Rūmī is one of the best authorities in this respect. He was a man of superb mystical experiences ; luckily he happened to be also a great philosopher of religion and an acute psychologist of religious consciousness. His view may be briefly summed up as follows. There are superior states of consciousness in which the human ego transcends the world of sense as well as the realm of logical reason. The knowledge granted in this state is not perceptual or logical. Human language evolved for biological ends and utilitarian purposes does not possess moulds in which such an experience could be poured. Two different things happen in the expression of this experience. It happens at its origin that the revelation of the Real emerging in the consciousness of the recipient is dramatised by the imaginative faculty. God the Revealer is not a Reality spatially external to the human soul ; He is potentially there in the essence of the human ego itself which is an emanation of the Divine essence. Transcendence of God is visualised by the crude mind as something spatial as if God were somebody up and above in the heavens and to communicate with the saints and the prophets He has to employ winged messengers. He says that spiritual experiences in their highest and purest forms reveal the fact that the realm of the spirit and divinity has no trace of space which belongs only to the realm of matter. Therefore, the Qur'ān pointed out that "God is nearer to you than your own neck-vein" (l. 16) meaning thereby that there is no spatial distance between the human ego and the Divine Self. The Divine Self in its infinity does transcend the finite human self, but this transcendence is not spatial. When the recipient of a revelation feels that an angel is giving him a message and actually sees him in some form, it is really the soul of the recipient whose inherent spiritual faculty is creating that illusion to make him feel that it is something outside and above his finite self which is a reality. Rūmī tries to explain it by the experience

of dreams in everyday life. All the time that a person is dreaming, some kind of dramatisation is going on in his mind. Symbolism is the language of the dreams, as has been recognised since times immemorial that the surface content of a dream has a latent content of meaning which is expressed symbolically or dramatically. In a dream a person is dealing with various persons who are not there but are personifications of ideas and sentiments which belong to the dreaming ego itself. Nobody else is there but himself. He says, similar is the case in those revelations in which some great meaning or purpose is emerging into the waking consciousness of a great prophet or a saint, from the Divine depths of the ego itself. It is the unfolding of the deeper spiritual faculties of the recipient himself. The revelation received assumes a dramatic form ; the form is only an appearance, but the revelation is real which distinguishes it from the haphazard dreams that symbolise only the hopes and fears and unfulfilled desires of the common man, even though such dreams too use the technique of symbolisation.

The other method that has often been used by prophets, saints and men of profound religious experience to give some indication of the Reality they have perceived or experienced is the use of similes, analogies and parables. That which is yet unseen by the uninitiated is described in terms of sense-perception that may have some remote resemblance to undescribable spiritual states. Again, we turn to Rūmī for a very convincing simile. He says that our main characteristic of a high spiritual state is ineffable bliss of a type that the psychophysical frame of man has never felt even in the most ecstatic moments of pleasure or happiness caused by any physical or mental fulfilment. The uninitiated insist that the mystic can surely give some indication of what it is like. The mystic is then compelled to resort to physical analogies. He may paint a picture of a paradisial state in which all desires and instinctual appetites, often

thwarted or inadequately fulfilled, are satisfied. Then you get the vision of a heaven as an abode where all natural desires are fulfilled without any conflicts or obstacles. For a man living in an arid and burning desert where water is scarce and greenery found only in an oasis to be reached after tantalising illusions of mirages, the highest vision of bliss is a garden of shady groves, traversed by streams and rivulets and a society of blessed men and women freed from all toil, living and moving in security and peace in delightful surroundings. Rūmī says that a person in whom the spiritual instinct is not yet awakened and operative is like a child in whom the sex instinct is making no urgent demands. The highest pleasure ever experienced by him is that which he gets by eating sweets that he covets. So one in the endeavour to explain to him the ecstasy of coitus could only say to him that it is like eating exquisite sweet delicacies. But the adults who know the pleasure of a satisfying dish eaten with good appetite and also the ecstasy of sex coitus are in a position to compare the two and knowing that the two pleasures are not only different in quantity or intensity but are thoroughly disparate and incommensurate. The satisfaction of one instinct is quite different from the satisfaction of another instinct. Therefore, the symbols of bodily senses used by spiritual religions are dictated by this unavoidable necessity. Every religion has created its own type of Paradise. The tropical man's Paradise could not be the same as the Paradise of those living in icy and freezing climates in the wild forests near the arctic regions. In the pagan Scandinavian creed the vision of Paradise was an immense hunting ground full of wild game and a hearth with big burning logs which roast the meat and warm the eater. If a nation is a lover of music, then you find the vision of Paradise as a perpetual symphony and angels playing on the harps. These pictures vary because of geographic and climatic conditions or differences of social environment. The

essential element of religious belief is this that the rewards of spiritual life are security and bliss wherein the conflicts of mundane life are somehow transcended. The variety of symbols and pictures does not in any way diminish or negate the objectivity of the fact. There is much truth in the saying of Emerson that the religion of the period becomes the poetry of another period. In the Western Christian countries nobody believes now in Graeco-Roman mythology, but the poetry of all European countries still freely uses it as an effective mode of expression. The gods of Homer still live on in the poetry of the Christian nations ; what is now used as poetry was once believed in as objectively real. Plato uses these myths for a similar purpose. It is not difficult to guess that he did not believe in the gods of his nation, but he still wanted to employ them for educational purposes. In his *Republic* he proposes to expunge from the books only those gods whose doings are immoral and retain only those whose stories could be used as edifying material in the educational curriculum. In the indictment of Socrates one of the charges was that he did not believe in the gods of the Greek religion. In his reply he dodged the question by saying : "Have I not been talking of divinity ?" For him Reality was ideal and ideational and gods were only imaginative symbols. When about to die of hemlock poisoning he discoursed on the possibilities after death. He would not assert anything dogmatically but said that if death is not total extinction, then there is the possibility of meeting all the great ones of the past together in one place —what an edifying prospect ! But he does not envisage meeting with the gods of Olympus in that spiritual environment because he did not believe in their supramundane existence. He was an intellectual and ethical theist, not altogether without a mystical strain.

18

ISLAM AND SYMBOLISM

RELIGIONS that take their symbolism as literal and objective truth must be classed among mythological creeds. All creeds are mythological in the sense that all use symbolism of one variety or another. But if a spiritual religion keeps in view the distinction between symbol and reality that it symbolises, then it can avoid the danger of sinking back into the mythological state of mind. Let us examine Islam from this viewpoint. The core and essence of Islam is the belief in one God ; but what is the Qur'anic conception of this one God ? Is this conception anthropomorphic ? Is He only an infinitised man ? Has man made God in his own image and then worshipped his own creation as a Creator ? A Persian poet imagines an idol addressing his worshipper and saying : "You created me in your own image ; what have you seen in me except your own self mirrored ?" Could one say this about the God of Islam ? Let us see how the Qur'an depicts Him. We start with the verse in which the unity and incomparability of God is summarised in four simple short and pithy sentences :

Say, He, Allah, is One.
Allah is He on Whom all depend.
He begets not, nor is He begotten,
And none is like Him (cxii. 1-4).

As the opening chapter of the Qur'an gives the essence of the Muslim prayer and sums up almost the entire religious attitude of a Muslim, so these verses on the last stage of the Qur'an sum up succinctly the

gist of pure and unadulterated monotheism. Therefore, it is called *al-Ikhlas*, "The Purity".

The first sentence rules out all religious polytheism as well as philosophic or naturalistic pluralism. As existence is a *universe* and not a *multiverse*, so the Creator, Sustainer or Ground of all Being is One. This rules out any independent or eternal existence of gods or powers beyond His jurisdiction; this rules out

The fundamental mission of Islam was purification of the idea of God, eliminating all polytheism, trinitarianism, incarnationism, philosophic absolutism and anthropomorphism in every garb. These verses of "Purity" give some basic attributes of God, the attribution being positive as well as negative. For the sake of clarification it is necessary to define an object or a concept positively as well as negatively. One must be told what the object of the definition is specifically and also what it is not. The attribute of oneness is positive. It is not only a religious but a scientific postulate as well. The presumption in physical science is the interrelatedness of all phenomena linked each to each by the inviolable chain of causation. There are no absolute yawning chasms in existence. "Thou seest no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent" (lxvii. 3).

If there were absolute breaks and the different realms or aspects of creation had no nexus, neither Nature nor the science of Nature would be possible. The uniformity of the laws of Nature implies that the immense variety and diversity of phenomena is rooted in some immanent unity. Herbert Spencer defined the course of evolution as progressive diversification with a parallel harmonisation of diversities; there is a cosmic urge towards unity which creates and binds infinite varieties of existence. A religion which emphasises the unity of God, the Source and Goal of all existence, is an ally of science which is also based on faith, though this faith is not formulated in religious terms. In the physical realm there is no greater unity in diversity than you find in the human organism. Billions of cells in the human body have individualities of their own and a great variety of functions, but every one of these countless cells is serving the purpose of preserving the whole organism. The consciousness that goes together with their organism is a still more marvellous unity. An infinite variety of experiences, subjective as well as objective, the immensities of time and space,

things and events, past and present, desires and expectations in the future are all bound together in the human ego. Human consciousness is a potential receptacle for all actual and possible existence ; it holds the ideal as well as the actual. Here we have a clue to the nature of ultimate reality ; therefore, it is a uniformly accepted maxim among the Muslim intellectual mystics that whoever has known the reality of his own self has recognised his Lord and Sustainer. An ideally healthy mind has a unified consciousness and any split in personality is an indication of disease and inner conflict and some maladaptation with the environment.

Besides physical science all philosophy is also an attempt at an intellectual co-ordination of all knowledge. Philosophy makes an effort to transcend the partialities of different sciences to make them contiguous with a common frontier. Morality essentially is an attempt to convert conflicts into harmonies. Beauty in every sphere is also a concord, the effulgence of a unity and harmony of diverse factors, and Love is the greatest of all binding forces transmuting opposition into agreement by its miraculous alchemy. Rūmī rightly calls Love the cure for all physical and mental diseases.

So we see that the unity of God which might be construed as unity of existence and unity of the ideal is no dogma. It is a postulate of all existence, cosmic or human ; only the oneness of the supreme creative power could be a guarantee of the preservation of values. An implicit faith in the fundamental unity of all existence is so compelling that every scientist and every philosopher accepts it as an axiom. Atheistic, materialistic or naturalistic monism is also intellectually possible, but belief in oneness here also is the basis of this world-outlook. The mistake of materialism is that it has picked up the lowest aspect of existence and believes it to be the whole ; it is an attempt to explain all existence with the lowest and the poorest of all categories. Natural science is also symbolic be-

cause it is based on mathematical symbols. But it is a poor speculative philosophy which impoverishes the richness of this glorious world and reduces its values and quantities to numbers as the Pythagoreans had done in the beginning of Greek philosophy. The human body and its proportions are measurable but its mathematics is a comparatively superficial aspect of its wonderful functioning. All beautiful objects have defined geometrical proportions but neither beauty nor aesthetic appreciation and pleasure are mere mathematics.

Mere oneness of the ground of existence or mere uniformity of natural causation would not by itself be tantamount to belief in One God. For Islam unity is a basic trait of divinity but, unless some other attributes are added to it, it cannot be an equivalent of God.

Let us touch briefly the rest of the three verses quoted above before we proceed further with the topic of symbolism. If reality is One and nothing is real outside God, then it follows logically that this Reality must be independent ; everything that emerges out of it is dependent on it for its very existence. The next verse says that it is self-caused or uncaused ; nor is God a cause of His creation in the sense in which phenomena are causes of one another, because every phenomenon that acts as a cause is itself the effect of another cause *ad infinitum*. Causation in the phenomenal world is only sequential. Begetting is also a form of causation and so the Qur'an says that it does not apply to God. God is nobody's father and nobody's son. Fatherhood or sonship in godhead are Christian conceptions. If they were used only as symbols there would be no harm in them, but the mistake lay therein that these symbols were identified with the eternal realities rooted in the very essence of God. People at a lower intellectual level are never satisfied with accepting symbols as mere symbols ; they tend to mistake the symbols for the Reality itself. Dogmatic Christianity in the early centuries was involved in an endless

strife about the person of Jesus and his relation to God, the Father and the Holy Ghost. It resulted in woeful heresies and persecutions. Divinity was converted into the mystery of Trinity and the simple faith of Jesus in a Beneficent Lord and Sustainer became an enigma, and faith was defined by some as believing in something that human reason considers to be obviously absurd. It was against this that the Qur'an protested and exhorted the Christians to drop that symbolism. The famous Spanish Muslim mystic and philosopher said that the mistake of dogmatic Christianity was not this that it called Jesus the son of God, but the only begotten son of God. If the fatherhood of God is symbolic, it should cover His relation to all creatures ; we are all sons of God. The Prophet of Islam said : "All creatures are the children of God," and all humanity is one family.

The last verse warns against the danger that lurks in all symbolism. You may choose and use good symbols but "none is like Him".

The opening chapter of the Qur'an which the Muslim repeats five times in his five daily prayers is called *Sūrat al-Fātihah*, which means the "Opening" because the Book opens with the verses contained in it and the ritual prayer also opens with it. It contains the gist of the Muslim creed giving the essential attributes of God and the believers' attitude towards Him. The seven short verses which contain in them the whole of Islam in a nutshell are of such universal significance that they can be used without hesitation in the prayer of any monotheist. Gandhi, the renowned Hindu leader of India, who was a theist, recited them in his sermons ; I have also heard them recited in a Christian Unitarian Church in the U.S.A. Some words in this prayer are so pregnant with meaning that no words in any foreign language can convey their full significance. The English translation does no justice to this magnificent prayer :

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,
The Benifcent, the Merciful,
Master of the Day of Requital.
Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.
Guide us on the right path,
The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed favours,
Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those
who go astray.

Let me say a few words about the poverty of this translation. Translation has been aptly called by an acute critic as the wrong side of tapestry ; only a very rough and unseemly outline of the beauty of the original pattern is reflected in it. Gibb, the great Arabic scholar, has demonstrated by some examples that some parts of the Qur'ān are untranslatable because even a good translation gives only a fragmentary and almost mutilated sense and the spiritual resonance of the rhythm which psychologically enriches the meaning is completely lost. Professor Arberry whose translation of the Qur'ān has been recently published is of the same opinion. I have quoted these great scholars so that I may not be suspected of exaggerating the difficulty.

It starts with two attributes of God followed by a third and then again the two basic attributes are repeated for the sake of emphasis to impress on the mind that God is essentially this. The two Arabic words are *ar-Rahmān* and *ar-Rahīm*. They are derived from *Rahmah* signifying tenderness, love and mercy. Now there is no English equivalent which would cover the entire connotation of this root. The two active principle nouns derived from it vary slightly in meaning, *Rahmān* meaning the preponderance of the quality of love and mercy and *Rahīm*, the constant exercise of this quality. The two words have been explained by the Prophet himself. He is reported to have said : " *Ar-Rahmān* is the Beneficent God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes after the creation." The working of natural processes as well as

the deeds of human beings require the exercise of this quality. One might say *Rahmān* is Creative Love, but there is no one word in English to denote a person whose inherent trait is creative love. After the coming into being of creatures God has to forgive their deviation from the right path almost constantly, for if human beings were not to be forgiven and their equilibrium constantly restored, wastage constantly replaced and damages caused by physical and moral trespasses constantly repaired, life could neither maintain itself nor develop. Whoever believes that evolution of the solar system or the development of life of the primeval cell to man has been achieved in spite of innumerable conflicts and obstacles is bearing witness to an urge in Nature that makes for amelioration.

The translation of the word *Rahīm* into Merciful is only slightly less inadequate because the word *Rahmah* from which it is derived is much richer than the quality of mercy only because it comprises all the tender sentiments for which there are various names. But the most unsatisfactory translation is that of the word *Rabb* which is usually translated into English as Lord. There is no doubt that the meaning of Lord and Master is also included in its import but the richer and more significant meaning according to the famous Qur'ānic lexicographer Rāghib is as follows : It signifies the quality of fostering a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion. Two other standard lexicons *Tāj-ul-'Arūs* and E.W. Lane's *Lexicon* also give the same meaning, fostering and nourishing, regulating, completing and accomplishing, the evolution of things from initial stages to perfection, the quality that is found in healthy parental love. But it is much more than fatherhood or motherhood ; therefore, it is much more appropriate calling God *Rabb* than *Ab* which means father. God having no sex could also be called mother which could be comparatively more appropriate because bringing the life-germ to perfection

in the womb and nourishing it with her own life-blood, then suckling it for a long period makes her more of a creator and nourisher than the father whose biological function is very slight. The function of a bread-winner is a secondary function which can be performed by the mother as well, as it is done in many cases, but it is impossible for the father to perform the biological function of the mother. For long periods in patriarchal societies woman had practically no independent legal or economic status and the patriarchal families wielded absolute authority ; he acted as a god in the family. In a theistic religion like Christianity God became the heavenly mother in matriarchal societies, some of which still exist in the south of India and some other places, but these matriarchal societies never attained to any clear-cut theism. Similarly, lordship is a monarchical and feudal conception applied to the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of the universe. Surely that is a very inadequate symbol. The monarchs and lords in general were never a very lovable lot ; with very few exceptions they were ruthless egotists who nourished less and exploited the helpless subject and serf much more. Many of them were less educated and less wise than some of their subjects. In the feudal system the undivided estate passed to the eldest son excluding other sons and heirs ; it was an unjust system necessitated by feudalism. Someone talked of this injustice to the famous literary genius Dr Johnson and he replied that it was very bad because it ensured that there shall be only one fool in a family of landed aristocracy. A man may be called the servant of God because religion is obedience to the will of God ; God demands service from man not for His own comfort and glory but exaltation of man himself ; God has no selfish ends as the lords and monarchs of the world have. God may be called Lord in a very ideal sense ; this connotation, therefore, is included in the word *Rabb* but the far richer meaning of *Rabb* is that given above which makes Him

a Power that not only creates but makes provision for the maximum development of the creatures that come into being because of His Creative Love.

Many ancient religions and philosophies were dualist in the sense that they conceived of two diametrically opposed worlds—the luminous and Divine world of gods and spirits and the world of darkness which was the sublunar world where chaos or dark forces reigned. In ancient Persian dualism Yazdān and Ahriman were in perpetual strife for sovereignty and jurisdiction. The undesirable part of the world was in the hands of the Devil and the good things were the creations of God and in His charge. Plato, the founder of philosophical idealism, is also a dualist; for him the real world is the realm of eternal ideas and this mundane world, the world of change and conflict, is a precarious blend of unreal matter and partially reflected ideas. His highest Reality, "the Good," in its eternal non-volitional static existence, has neither knowledge of the particulars or individuals nor any love or concern for them. Similarly, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism hated the world of matter where, because of the lack of Divine light, only evil forces or mere chaos reigned. The case of Indian philosophies and religions is not much different. They all wanted deliverance from this God-forsaken world, where evil cannot be mended and, therefore, the world and this life must be ended. All such philosophies and creeds tended to be pessimistic. They fixed their attention on the limitations, shortcomings and conflicts of life, ignoring the infinite capacity of life to transmute evil into good through knowledge, hope and perseverance. Life lost its self-confidence and religion became identified with asceticism. These were not creeds of light but of flight. The antagonism of the spirit and the flesh dominated such creeds. The mundane world was for them the world of darkness or cosmic illusion; salvation lay in renunciation or passive resignation or active mortification of the flesh.

Islam is the first world religion which emphatically repudiated this outlook. It inculcated that God is *Rabb-ul-'Ālamīn*, the Greater Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds. No part of His creation is forsaken or handed over to evil and chaotic forces. The Qur'ān has repeated in more than one place that this world is not an illusion nor is it a purposeless vain sport ; it is real and earnest. The whole conception of religion in Islam is that religious life is not a life of asceticism ; religion means living this very life with a new attitude. The blessings of life are to be contemplated and appropriated. A Muslim is taught to pray : "O God ! grant me well-being in this life and in the life hereafter." It is stated in a verse in the Qur'ān that virtuous people tasting the fruits of their virtuous deeds in Paradise shall say : "O Lord ! they are similar to the fruits that we tasted in our worldly life also." Life here also could be paradisial if one's outlook is changed. The Prophet said that a stretch of a few yards from his cottage to the mosque was a portion of Paradise ; it was materially a poor place with a muddy floor, joining a muddy cottage with a muddy and thatched place of worship, but the spiritual vibration of the prayers of pure souls made him feel it as a part of the eternal realm of the spirit.

Merely believing in God or His oneness is not enough ; a man's life and religion are determined by the qualities that he attributes to his God. Islam wants human beings to be imbued with beneficence and love and, therefore, it emphasises these qualities in the attributes of God. A Muslim is enjoined to begin every act of life by repeating the words that God is *Rahmān* and *Rahīm*. So the quality and the ideal of Creative Love may be indelibly inscribed on his mind, to issue into acts of love and mercy. If his God is *Rabb*, he too must co-operate with Him in nourishing all the good forces of life so that life may evolve in every aspect. As *Rabb* is Lord and Nourisher of all the worlds, no world is to be condemned and renounced. The body and the spirit

both have a right to be nourished and being two aspects of the same reality the injury to one shall tend to cause injury to the other. Matter and flesh have to be spiritualised as to some extent they already are.

So we see how significant it is that God should be conceived and worshipped as Lord and Providence of all the worlds. Such a belief would result in man's healthy attitude towards life and save him from splitting existence into the Realm of Light and the Realm of Darkness, the latter being the creation of an anti-Divine evil spirit. The attributes of *Rahmān* and *Rabb* signifying creative and ameliorative love cannot be called symbolic ; they are the essence of Divinity. These qualities have to be sought and promoted in human life. Love is creative as well as preservative of intrinsic values. There is no higher religion than belief in such a life-giving and life-advancing force which swallows upon all negations and transmutes them into a higher synthesis. Love is a co-ordinator of all the worlds as it is a solvent of all the conflicts that emerge in human relations. Only love rooted in the senses and in the finite egotism of man is blind. Divine Love in which man can participate is Enlightened Love ; such Love is also Light.

The concept of light used for reason and consciousness is certainly symbolic. This symbol is used to characterise the nature of God and spiritual life in many religions and philosophies. The whole metaphysics of Neoplatonism is based on this symbol. Prophets and saints exhort people to emerge from darkness into light. Jesus rightly called himself the Light of Life, promising that whosoever shall follow him shall not walk in darkness. Muhammad is also presented in the Qur'ān as a luminous lamp. In the physical realm there is nothing more marvellous than light which even Einstein's Relativity has demonstrated to be absolute in the otherwise changing phenomena. Co-ordinate with physical light is the human sight, the highest of man's senses which gives more knowledge

than all the other senses taken together. Reason extends man's knowledge of Reality beyond the frontiers of perception but for that too we use the symbol of light, the light of reason, which illuminates the darkness of the unknown.

Light, as we know it, is a physical phenomenon which becomes what it is because of the mechanism of our eyes. So when we use this concept for consciousness, we use it symbolically. Seeking a symbol for God which is cosmic consciousness we cannot find any better than light. The Qur'an has used a good deal of symbolism in Divine attributes, but none is more enlightening than the symbol of light; but this symbol is presented in a way that it points beyond itself. God is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp and the lamp is in a glass case, and the glass is, as it were, a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not—light upon light—God guides to His light whom He pleases and God sets forth parables (or similes) for men and God is cognizant of all things (xxiv. 35-36).

It is perhaps the most luminous verse in the Qur'an about the nature or essence of God. After saying that God is the light of the heavens and the earth, it adds that it is only a likeness not to be taken too literally; the Qur'an has also said elsewhere that eyes comprehend Him not though He comprehends the eyes, and nothing in creation is even like the likeness of Him. As theologies are apt to turn into mythologies by taking a symbol for the Reality itself, therefore, the warning is added that it is the likeness of Him for Whom really there is no likeness. The simile gives only a remote indication. God, as Light is, as it were, a glass-encased lamp placed in a niche. This is very significant. One needs in theologies and philosophies a good deal of God's infinities which necessarily get identified with impersonality. Infinitely diffused

light would be a wrong symbol for a self. The Qur'an presents God as a *Self*, the great "I am" of the Old Testament. It is the nature of the Self to have a centre where all the radii of infinite experience meet or originate—a centre of knowledge as well as a centre of will. It was to point towards the egohood of God that He was likened to an encased lamp placed in a niche. But lest He may be conceived spatially, it is said that it is essentially non-spatial—neither eastern nor western. God is a Spirit and even in a spirit of a limited nature like the human ego there is nothing spatial; the ideas of man do not exist in a three-dimensional space.

Saying that God is the light of the heavens and the earth indicates His immanence in all creation. Many anthropomorphic theologies placed God somewhere high in the sky; heaven was considered the abode of God, and earth the abode of His creatures; the heaven was exalted and the earth was abased; Paradise was situated in the heaven and Hell somewhere in the bowels of the earth. This verse counteracts such a crude idea. God, the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds—high or low, *Rabb-ul-'Ālamīn*—is immanent in all the worlds, high or low, though this immanence has its gradations. It is less in matter and more in organic realms of plants and animals rising still higher in the human ego. Among the human egos too there is a gradation; it is dimmed by the gross physical desires and egotism of the common man and shines with purity in the souls of prophets and saints. The phrase "light upon light" points to different grades of spiritual enlightenment, the highest being the light of Divinity itself, "a light that never was on sea or land". The last part of this verse makes it clear that these are similes or parables to make the ineffable reality somewhat comprehensible to man; they are not to be taken as the essence of Reality itself. Its manifestations are phenomenal to which the categories of our sense-experience do not apply. The contro-

versy about God's immanence or transcendence is really rooted in man's spatial consciousness ; transcendence is visualised as a sort of space beyond space where God resides up and above His creation, and immanence is mentally pictured as containment in things: In this sense God is neither immanent nor transcendent. Therefore, the Qur'an says that God is not to be conceived in spatial terms. God's is the East and God's is the West, but He is neither eastern nor western, nor above nor below. Whithersoever you turn your face there is the face of God (ii. 115).

The question whether religious language is allegorical and symbolic or all statements have to be accepted as literal truth has been settled by the Qur'an itself by stating clearly that some of its verses are *Muhkamat* (unambiguous, outright statements, clear, decisive injunctions) and others are *Mutashābihāt*, where more than one meaning or interpretation is possible—ambiguous, symbolical or allegorical (iii. 7). Religion for all practical purposes, for common humanity, should confine itself to categorical, decisive statements ; the ambiguous or allegorical verses may cause only confusion in the minds of those who are not intellectually and spiritually mature ; they are also apt to be made bones of contention among those who are more fond of metaphysical controversies or logical hairsplitting than genuine men of religion.

Verse 7 in the chapter *Āl-i-'Imrān* (The Family of 'Imrān) runs as follows :

He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee : some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical ; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it their own interpretation : but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say : "We believe in it, it is all from our Lord, and none do mind except those having understanding."

The word *mutashābihāt* itself has two meanings.

The word is derived from the Arabic root *shibh* which means likeness or resemblance. In an allegory, a metaphor, a simile or a parable the statements have some resemblance to the reality that is signified ; how far the simile accords with actual significance may be controversial because the words may be susceptible of various interpretations. For instance, when it is said that God sees and hears, his seeing or hearing cannot be the same as that which is made possible by our sense-organs but surely there must be some resemblance, the exact nature of which is impossible for us to realise or visualise. Similarly, when it is said that persons in an exalted spiritual state shall see God, this seeing of God by His creatures also could not be as we see an object in front of us which sends vibrations to our optic nerves. In this vision of God, there could be no question of our physical eyes seeing a physical object. God is not a physical object. But still a soul's vision of God is a fact experienced by some gifted souls. The similarity lies in this that both in physical and spiritual vision realities are actually perceived, however different may be the nature of these perceptions. The use of similes in the description of spiritual states is a necessity, but there is always the danger that the simile may be stretched and the sensible imagery may begin to mislead having been taken as an objective fact. Many a false theology is the result of such a confusion. Therefore, the Qur'an has issued a warning that such statements in scriptures may mislead people into grotesque belief which may strike at the very root of the truth, that was meant to be so expressed.

The second meaning of *mutashābihat* is "things that are consimilar or conformable and resemble one another". Although the Qur'an has made this distinction of *muhkam* and *mutashābih* and said that some verses are of this and some of that type, yet in one place it says that the whole Book is *Muhkam* or decisive (xi. 1), and in another place it calls itself *Kitāban Mutashābihan* (xxxix. 23). On the surface these different verses

seem to contradict each other, but a careful consideration shows that there is no contradiction involved. What is meant is really this that so far as the basic truths of religion are concerned, the whole of the Qur'ān is categorically decisive; therefore, it consists of only *Muḥkamāt*, unambiguous truths without a shadow of doubt or indecision (as in the opening lines of the Qur'ān it is said that it is a Book which is free of doubt and is based on absolute certainties). When it is said again that all its verses are *mutashābihān*, it means that they are mutually conformable; this is the second meaning of the word. Both of these meanings are accepted as correct by all lexicographers. The ambiguities of the similes and allegories are the products of the limitations of human understanding; with God the Revealer of Truth they have one stable meaning; it is only human beings that either purposely or inadvertently create confusion and cause clashes of interpretations. People with mature understanding of spiritual realities accept them as true because of their knowledge and faith. The verses quoted above state it clearly that among men of understanding, truths allegorically expressed cause no mischief; it is the intellectually and spiritually immature persons who enter into fruitless controversies about them and harden such statements into irrational dogmas.

A highly spiritual man who had completely annihilated all sensual and egotistic desires and had thoroughly attuned his will to the will of God Whom allegorically he called his heavenly father is reported to have said: "I and my Father are one." This is a demand made on every human soul that it should surrender all egotistic desires to the universal love and will of God (this is the literal meaning of the word *Islām*). A man becomes genuinely and completely religious only when he has achieved this end. So many mystics and saints have testified to this feeling of oneness, but this did not mean to them the complete identity of being. But the Christian dogma of Trinity

or the divinity of Jesus is based on such utterances as were not exclusively the experience of Jesus. The Eucharist and the doctrine of transsubstantiation of bread and wine actually and mysteriously becomes the real, and flesh and blood of Christ is another instance. Community of spirit between Jesus and his disciples metaphorically expressed in terms of flesh and blood began to be believed as a physical fact. Similar is the case of belief in physical resurrection and Christ's bodily ascent to an astral heaven to the abode of his heavenly Father. In all such beliefs spatial and physical terms used for spiritual events converted these events into physical facts.

The best and most fruitful way of understanding a scripture like the Qur'ān is this: we should first try to know if it establishes certain principles in clear words as the basis of its creed and as the fundamental of its outlook on life. If we could do that, then we have to proceed on the assumption of the authenticity of its claim that there is an inner harmony among all parts of this Book and it is completely free from internal contradictions. We have to proceed about this Book as we proceed with legal enactments. When a certain law is laid down in unmistakable terms, then any statement that appears to conflict with the basic principles and is apparently opposed to the law so laid down must be interpreted subject to the principle enunciated. If we find in the Qur'ān allegorical words susceptible of different meanings, we must accept only that interpretation as correct which is consonant with the other parts and is in conformity with the principles clearly enunciated. For instance, it is clearly stated in the chapter named "Light" from which we have already quoted that even light, the best of all symbols for Divine consciousness, is only a symbol. Then using the simile of a glass-encased lamp in a niche, the Book wants to make it clear that Divine consciousness is centred in a self. Then adding that it is neither Eastern nor Western it is meant to convey the Divine

reality is non-spatial. Space and physical bodies are interrelated in such a manner that that which is non-spatial is also non-physical; therefore, no physical term applied to God is to be taken literally; it must be interpreted as a symbolic or an allegorical statement. After this, if we read of God sitting on a throne, the throne could not be anything physical, nor sitting on it as anything that it means for us. God's hands and feet and eyes could not mean any physical organs. All verses in which such words are used must be interpreted as allegories. Not only the being of God but the reality of man also is given as a spiritual entity. God addresses human beings as souls; everywhere man is called *Nafs* which may be translated both as mind and as soul. He who achieved the purpose of his existence and returned unto the bosom of his Creator, is welcomed by God in the words: "O soul satisfied! return unto thy Lord pleasing and being pleased; join the company of My servants and enter Paradise" (lxxxix. 27-30). Here is the Spirit of the Lord welcoming the spirit of man. A further proof that these bodies of ours with which our spirit is temporarily associated need not be resurrected to enjoy or suffer in the life hereafter is clearly offered in a statement in the Qur'an: "Don't call those dead who have suffered martyrdom in the way of the Lord from Whom they are receiving their food and sustenance" (iii. 169). Just think for a moment. The body of the martyr is lying in some grave for all purposes dead for us, dust unto dust, but God assures us that he is very much alive enjoying God's banquet. It is obvious that the martyred person has discarded this mortal frame for good; if he has any kind of body, it is not the same old body, because his mundane physical body is lying somewhere here under a heap of earth. If his body needed not to be resurrected now to enjoy the reward of his martyrdom, why should it be reconstructed and resurrected after millions of years on the Doomsday to be physically rewarded? If God has not lifted the body of the martyr to another

higher realm and he has entered the company of the righteous as "soul satisfied," then it follows that he is not in his physical body now and the food that he is receiving for sustenance could not be anything that is wanted by our physical bodies. Most Christians believe that Jesus had a physical resurrection and was bodily lifted to Heaven and the Pope now has enjoined all his followers to hold the belief that his mother also was bodily lifted to Heaven. Such a belief would be in flat contradiction to what is indicated in the Qur'ān about life in the realm of the spirit. Among the company of the spirits who had left their bodies here Jesus alone would be living with his old worldly frame; surely this is a grotesque conception.

Does the Qur'ān say nothing about the resurrection of bodies on the Day of Judgment? Surely there are many verses which on the surface seem to uphold this belief. Pre-Islamic pagan Arabs did not believe in life after death. Their only conception of life was physical; it was beyond them to understand that man essentially is a spirit. They said they did not believe in resurrection because they who were essentially bodies had perished and thereby totally annihilated. How could their bodies be reconstructed by collecting scattered atoms? To such people the Qur'ān gave a simple reply that could create conviction in them. It says: Don't you realise that before these bodies of yours received these enlivened forms, you were nothing but dead matter. It was God's creative power that, bringing together the material atoms, infused them with life. Why do you think that that power was exhausted after your first creation? Couldn't God's infinite creative power and wisdom do a second time what it did when it created you out of lifeless matter? This argument is advanced to convince those who could understand only a physical resurrection. The Qur'ān only says that God is capable of this repetition; it is meant to emphasise God's creative omnipotence. It does not imply that actually there must be

physically resurrection. The Qur'an has said elsewhere that human beings who are already resurrected have discarded their bodies here as useless stuff. God did not think it necessary to resurrect their bodies. Why should the physical resurrection of others be necessary? Islam demands only the belief that human life does not end with physical death and life shall continue in another realm. Added to the belief in survival is the belief that the condition of the soul in the next life shall be determined as a necessary effect of the life lived here. Every soul carries with it the consequences of all that it has lived. In the words of the Qur'an, every soul is pledged to that which it has earned (lii. 21; lxxiv. 38). If the good acts have outweighed the bad ones, the soul shall enjoy a good condition, but if the sins have preponderated them the condition shall be painful. As survival had to be explained in physical terms, so the rewards and punishments too have to be depicted in the language of the senses. These graphic descriptions are only allegories because the Qur'an itself has said about Paradise that its description is allegorical. It says: "The likeness or similitude of Paradise is as if it were a garden" (xlvii. 15). And about Hell it is clearly stated that its flames rise from within the human hearts (civ. 7).

It is reported that a non-Muslim having heard the verse of the Qur'an that the extent of Paradise is the extent of the entire universe asked the Prophet: "Where, then, is Hell situated?" The Prophet gave him a delightfully philosophic answer in the form of a counter question. He said: "Where is the night when the day dawns?"—meaning thereby that Heaven and Hell are states and not geographical locations. In another place the Qur'an has proclaimed that the *Rahmah*, the Love and Mercy of God, covers entire creation (vii. 156). To a superficial observer the universe in its entirety does not seem to manifest God's Love because there is so much strife of contraries and

so much physical and moral evil in Nature as well as human life. But the prophetic vision, like the intellectual idealistic vision of Plato, considers the Real Being as identical with "The Good". Whatever non-good emerges in phenomenal or human existence is transitory or instrumental for the ultimate realisation of the Good, because there is a lot of Good like the strength of the moral fibre of man which could not develop or exist without the overcoming of obstacles. The problem of evil presents difficult problems for the believer in an omniscient, omnipotent and infinitely good God, but for the believers it is a matter of faith, and for the prophet and the mystic it is an experience that goodness or love is the Ground of Being. When the Qur'an says that Paradise is co-extensive with all existence and love also covers all existence (vii. 156), it is easy to draw the conclusion that Paradise is a spiritual state of love and well-being. The soul that has realised it is already in a paradisial state as is corroborated by the verse already quoted wherein it is said that when in the life hereafter the virtuous shall taste some fruits they shall say that they had already tasted something like it before (ii. 25).

The question arises in some minds that if Paradise and Hell as depicted in the Qur'an are couched only in symbolic and allegorical language, why is there such profusion of sense-imagery and such vividness of detail? The answer to this may well be sought in poetic literature. Take for instance Persian mystical poetry to which there is no parallel in any other literature. In the literature of all great religions one finds more or less mystical lore but the beauty and the profundity of Persian mystical poetry is something unique. The Sufi poets like Sana'i, 'Attar, Hafiz and Rumi, besides countless others, adopted the symbol of the wine for spiritual exhilaration because in the realm of sense there is nothing else that has some likeness to the ecstasy felt at the spiritual level by men of religious experience in their most exalted states. All of

these Sūfī poets, leaving apart some of the pseudo-mystical poets who enjoyed and created this imagery for the sake of art, are known to have been pious teetotallers, if not actual ascetics. None of them ever touched alcohol or any other intoxicant, but look at their imagery of the wine, the tavern and the Sāqī. There is hardly any one lyric of Hāfiẓ in which you do not find some variety of this inexhaustible imagery. People who actually drink habitually and consider wine to be the greatest producer of bliss could not improve on what these pious ascetics depict in this symbolism. Although wine is prohibited in Islam and religious or respectable people are expected to abstain from it completely, it is an irony of literary expression that Muslims alone have made *Khamriyāt* (wine poetry) as their speciality. Nations among which almost everyone drinks more or less and wine is used also in religious ritual have not produced one-tenth of this kind of poetry. Recently quite an eminent Urdu poet Riyād wrote nothing but wine poetry. He seems to have excelled all his predecessors in this form of art. If one did not know him one would consider him to be a confirmed wine-bibbler, but it is a fact that he never touched alcohol in his entire life; he was only following a literary tradition; he was no mystic himself of any exalted spiritual experience.

Western Christian critics of Islam have ridiculed the Qur'ānic Paradise as a sensual elysium, although the Qur'ān had indicated that the description is allegorical and no soul can visualise what bliss God will grant those who have lived pure and virtuous lives (xxxii. 17). The funny aspect of this criticism is that the West, particularly since the Renaissance and with accelerated speed and emphasis, is making great efforts to create such a Paradise on this earth. This is the chief characteristic and urge of this primarily sensate civilisation. What do we find in the picture of the Qur'ānic Paradise? Virtuous people, both men and women living in gardens in which streams flow; both

sexes enjoying eternal youth and beauty enveloped by the love and peace of God, blessed with Beatific Vision. The main target of ridicule are the eternally young and beautiful women. But why should they be not there? Perhaps the unavowed ground of this prejudice against women is that, according to Christian tradition, it was Eve who persuaded Adam to commit that first act of disobedience which, as original sin, is inherited as a woeful legacy by human child even before he is out of the mother's womb. The daughters of Eve are punished by the pangs of child-birth. Very early in Christianity sex urge was condemned as a source of sin and absolute abstention from it as an indispensable condition for untainted spirituality. Jesus had not married and the life of Jesus was a model for his followers. Then St Paul, responsible mostly for the turn that early Christianity took, considered sex to be an evil necessity. 'It is better to marry than to burn,' sums up his attitude towards sex, an attitude which filled monasteries with monks and nuns and made marriage taboo for Catholic priesthood. Women had to be avoided in this world as potential agents of the Devil. It was protestantism and the revolt of the erstwhile monk Luther that made marriage lawful for the priests and started a change of attitude towards sex. In the Muslim picture of Paradise both sexes live in blissful freedom and the Qur'an says that all sinful tendencies having been overcome there shall be no trace of obscenity or vulgarity. When the Qur'an promises Paradise as a result of virtuous and prayerful living, the spiritual state must be a perfection of virtue and not an abolition of it. Pious men and pious women are mentioned together and said to enjoy paradisial beatitude. In the Christian heaven there is a lot of music, but women are not much in evidence.

At the time of the advent of Islam spirituality all over the world had become identified with life-negating asceticism. Craving for good food was sin, dressing well was a sin, care for the body was a sin, so much

so that some highly praised Christian saints called lice and vermin the pearls of spirituality. Bath was considered as a licentious luxury. Curbing of all biological instincts and mortification of the flesh were an indispensable condition for salvation. An anti-ascetic religion like Islam which made even physical pleasures lawful within the bonds of law and virtue was considered to be an unpardonable aberration. The religion which said that a married state is superior to celibacy and a wage-earner is better than—the monk was not understandable by those in whom the belief had become ingrained that flesh is the enemy of the spirit. The Qur'ān's allegorical picture of Paradise is an indirect sanctification of the flesh and is meant to correct a wrong attitude towards it. It serves to draw a picture of desirable life, an ideal life of beauty and purity, where healthy desires are fulfilled, in a society without conflicts, a society in which there are no masters and no servants, no racial distinctions, no individual or collective egotism, no strife of creeds, in which Truth and Beauty and Goodness have coincided in an everlasting reality, and where knowledge means the perception of God Himself. A picture of such a society in which the conflict of egoism and altruism has been resolved and no desire arises which necessitates injustice and exploitation to be fulfilled, is a Utopian picture which shall never be possible to be realised in this world of stresses and strains, but the beauty of life shall always be judged by the degree of approximation to this ideal state. The actualities of a higher spiritual state may be much different and there may be no categories of sense and logic which are adequate to describe them. Man craves for knowledge as well as for love and security; his instinctive craving is for happiness and joy. If God exists, there is a guarantee that Divinely-created human desires are not illusions. Every soul, as Socrates also taught, instinctively desires to realise the good, and sin or wrongdoing is the result of mistaking for good that which is the opposite of it; there

is nothing wrong about the thirst that a wanderer in the desert feels and the water that shall satisfy it is also real, but the illusion of the mirage makes the shining sands appear like a sheet of crystal clear water.

Socrates, in Plato's *Republic*, is the first great thinker, literary artist and social reformer who has drawn a picture of the ideal society. But in this Ideal State there is a rigid caste system. Men are eugenically contrived to be born unequal in capacity and opportunity; some are destined for knowledge and others are condemned to perpetual ignorance and unquestioned obedience. Such a State is visualised as the embodiment of ideal justice. No one except Socrates and Plato considered such a State to be desirable or practicable. Socrates said that it was a pattern in Heaven; it could be realised in this phenomenal world only if kings become philosophers or philosophers become kings, that is to say when power and wisdom coincide.

There is some pragmatic value even in such Utopias even if they err in the means proposed. It draws a picture of selfless and wise rulers who have merged their individualities in the good of the whole as they conceive it. It points towards a fact that love of property and love of family tend to make a man unjust, and society has to guard itself against the dangers inherent in these institutions. But the State of Plato's *Republic* is a Fascist State which can be realised only by unnatural limitations of individual freedom; a person's status is imposed on him by his birth. This has much in common with the rigid Hindu caste system, a cast-iron structure of society based on birth.

Ideologies should be judged by the Utopias or Ideal States which they visualise or tend to realise. Islam desires human beings to improve their way of life in this world. The Qur'an teaches the Muslim to pray: "O Lord! grant me well-being in this world and in the life hereafter" (ii. 201). It also defines what is meant by well-being in this world. Man is a social or, as Aristotle put it, a political animal. All ascetic religions

—and almost all great religions before Islam were ascetic—ignored this basic fact of human existence. They were all seeking deliverance from this world of flesh and matter. Islam preaches a creed not of deliverance but of fulfilment. It makes an attempt to found political, social and economic democracy rooted in a conception of God Who does not judge people by their birth or wealth. After an initial experiment the Muslims gradually slipped back into old ways. They retained social democracy in a measure superior to any other society, but a rapidly expanding realm made political democracy or a democratic republic impracticable and with absolute monarchies feudalism and capitalism also crept in, and they forgot the Qur'ānic injunction that State and society must be regulated in such a manner that wealth does not circulate only in a few hands.

Original Islam was a theo-democracy. It was neither a theocratic nor a secular State—a distinction which was the creation of Western history engaged in a perpetual strife between the Church and the State.

The picture of Muslim Heaven is a picture of Islamic theo-democracy, social justice, peace and security. Islam abolishes priesthood ; there is no exact equivalent of the word “priesthood” in the Arabic language, as there is no exact translation of orthodoxy. So you find no priests or laymen in Muslim Paradise ; men and women there live on equal terms ; there are no rulers and no ruled ; there is beauty and love, peace and security. The reality of Paradise in a higher spiritual state is bound to be much different from its allegorical picture. The Prophet confirmed what many a mystic including St Paul has said that God's Paradise is such that no eye has seen it and no ear has heard about it and it has never entered the human mind in its ordinary consciousness. Jesus too found it so difficult to explain to his disciples what he meant by the Kingdom of Heaven.

In comparison with the reality of a spiritual Paradise the picture in the Qur'ān is only an allegory as

the Qur'ān has pointed out that it is only a similitude, but it reflects an ideal of human society in this world; it is a refutation of the ascetic's view of life.

It is possible that a society loses faith in spiritual realities and becomes materialistic in belief and practice. Proceeding on this conviction it starts the conquest of physical nature and its declared aim is the multiplication of material goods. This is what has happened in the West during the last two or three centuries, particularly after the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Industrialised nations fixed their attention mostly on economic development and the economists accepted the postulate that economics has nothing to do with ethics or religion, as Machiavelli before the beginning of this era had inculcated the doctrine that politics is above morals and the aim of every political entity is the acquisition, preservation and extension of power. With the search for sources of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods started a race for the conquest of unindustrialised nations. Wars ceased to be religious or dynastic and became instruments of economic imperialism. Every nation wanted to create a Paradise for itself and a Hell for others. As the movement was devoid of any moral or spiritual urge they were all enveloped by a common Hell and for the first time in history armed conflict on global scale occurred which the development of technology had made possible. They learnt nothing from the horrors of this holocaust and the peace terms imposed by the conquerors on the vanquished became a prelude to still more deadly armageddon. Within each nation too the haves and the have-nots, the capitalists and the wage-earners were engaged in a cold war. Every nation was torn from within. Fascism and Communism proposed panaceas to remedy these ills, but the remedies proved worse than the disease. All essential freedoms which are essential for the dignity of humanity were curtailed to the point of annihilation. States became totalitarian regimented societies of ants and bees. Individual

freedom which had emerged precariously after millenia of evolution received a terrible setback. It was promised that workers of the world, irrespective of race and nationality mustering their forces and rising in revolt, shall create a Paradise on this earth by an equitable distribution of goods. Communism was the same materialism over again made into a creed and faith as feudalism and capitalism had never done.

Such are the results of attempts of creating a Paradise on this earth disregarding the moral and spiritual basis of life. Search for happiness became the lust of power. The Hell thus let loose was more ghastly and lurid than any picture presented by Christianity or Islam. Now with hydrogen bombs humanity is on the verge of suicide. How right was Rūmī when he said that knowledge in the service of the spirit is a friend of life but serving non-spiritual ends it bites like a venomous snake. Only when man's control of physical nature is supplemented and informed by the knowledge and aim of the spirit can humanity fulfil the destiny for which God has created man. It is when knowledge and love go hand in hand that man can rise above the beast and become truly the paragon of creation.

Al-Ghazālī and Shāh Waliullāh

Having given my interpretation of symbolic statements in which religious consciousness has often expressed itself and supported my views by some verses in the Qur'ān, I think it will carry more conviction if I strengthen these views with the authority of two outstanding figures in Muslim religious philosophy. They were both men of profound religious experiences and at the same time were distinguished by a very high level of intellectuality. Such men have not accepted religion at second hand nor is religion for them a blind faith.

The autobiographical account of Ghazālī's tribulations is unique in the history of Islam. After having

achieved great renown as a theologian and religious controversialist, he began to feel that religion to be genuine and a living reality must be based not on authority but on personal experience. He sought guidance from books on practical Sūfism and subjected himself to psychical and ethical discipline to reach exalted states or spiritual consciousness. He has not described his experiences in detail but has given his conclusions and convictions based on supraconscious consciousness. He confirms the experience of many a saint that there is another dimension of being and another level of consciousness in which such reality is revealed as cannot be expressed in terms of sensuous perception or logical processes. You cannot reach this state by reasoning or practice of common morality. The categories of sense and reason are so utterly incommensurate with what is revealed in this state that any description of it in terms of senses or of logic is apt to be misleading. As the ear, however sound and acute, can never take the place of sight, so sight or ratiocinative processes can never attain to this higher perception. Ghazālī calls it prophetic consciousness in which the reality of those things is revealed which a man without experience accepts only as a matter of faith based on authority. You know by experience what is meant by angels and what is the reality of revelation. The realities of spiritual life are not objects of our senses and, therefore, their description in the language of the senses must be taken as symbolical. It is legitimate to believe that Paradise or Hell are essentially conditions of the spirit which can be brought about without their being caused by objects outside the spirit itself. A person in a nightmare is bitten by snakes and scorpions and feels the same pains that he would feel if he were actually bitten by them in his waking life. Mind can create its own Heaven and Hell; if they are felt by the spirit they are real for all practical purposes. Ghazālī illustrates his view by an example. A prophet says that he has seen the sinners being tortured by scorpions.

There are three ways in which his statement may be accepted as true. One might believe that these scorpions are actually there but they are of such a nature that we cannot see them with our physical eyes. The second way of acceptance would be to believe that the spirit of the sinner is feeling this kind of torture without there being scorpions of any kind objectively present. The chief thing is the mental effect and not the object that has caused it. The third mode of believing in such a case would be that the prophetic imagination has visualised it as such and then described it in similar terms. A man suffering from intense fever says he is burning although he is not being consumed by any external physical fire. It is a simile and an idiomatic expression based on likeness which is felt.

Shāh Walīullāh has dealt with religious symbolism in a different manner. Just as Plato talks of a realm of ideas as distinct from and above the phenomenal world, so Walīullāh believes that there is a realm of symbols. In this realm abstract ideas assume concrete shapes which become perceptible by saints and prophets. He says that dreamland is also a realm of symbols, a fact which has been recognised for thousands of years. Certain facts of the life of the dreamer are presented in the dream in symbolic forms. In numerous statements of the Prophet we see abstract conceptions in concrete forms. He said that on the Day of Judgment these abstractions shall be seen as objective realities. God will order the days of the week to present themselves and among them Friday shall have a resplendent visage. Prayer and fast and charity shall be personified; good and bad deeds shall be seen as entities. Worldly life shall be seen as an old woman with half the hair on the head white and the other half black. Once after prayers he said that he saw Hell and Heaven between the wall of his cottage and the mosque; he was seen stretching his hand and on questioning he replied that he was plucking a bunch of grapes from a grove in Paradise.

A rationalist psychologist would interpret it simply as creations of a powerful imagination which is a concomitant of strong religious emotions. Waliullāh believed that they are not the creations of an individual's imagination but are objectively real in a realm of symbols. As the human mind invents symbols in dreams, it is possible that in waking life too an individual may see something which has assumed a particular shape for him only due to his own special condition; therefore, this thing may not be perceptible for others. A verse in the Qur'ān mentions a day when the sky was full of smoke (xli. 11). 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd said that there was no actual smoke but in a severe famine people suffering from intense hunger had their vision dimmed and distorted and the atmosphere appeared to them as dark and dismal. God, manifesting Himself in different forms on the Day of Judgment and talking to people, cannot be an objective fact because He is above change and time and space; only people with a new vision will see Him as such.

What we gather out of Shāh Waliullāh's explanation and interpretation as a clearly intelligible fact is only this that abstractions and spiritual realities are often perceived symbolically, mostly by persons of intense religious consciousness. In their concretion they create pictures, similes and symbols, but it is difficult to grasp why there should be a separate realm of symbols. The great psychologist Jung has developed a theory of the Racial Unconscious which has created symbols common to all mankind; it is also a kind of realm which now seems to exist independent of the individual consciousness.

ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

THE things that concern man most vitally are the most difficult to define. Who has ever succeeded to offer a definition of religion that would satisfy all creeds and all sects and all philosophers of religion? The difficulty is not less in every single religion, great or small. The hundreds of Christian sects would define Christianity differently; everyone considering some one or more traits as essential constituents of it, while the others would regard them either un-Christian or of secondary importance. Islam is proverbially reputed to have seventy-two sects, though it would be difficult for any research scholar to count more than a dozen. Hinduism is a completely undefinable entity and it is now agreed, only for the sake of a census, that whoever calls himself a Hindu is a Hindu, irrespective of his beliefs or practices. Besides the division of sects, individuals within the pale of the same creed have widely different views and angles of vision about what actually constitutes the essence of religion.

I do not expect that the view of religion or Islam in particular as presented in this book would be universally accepted; however, I may substantiate it by the authority of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. My like-minded co-religionists would hold it to be true but whoever cares to differ may interpret the same verses differently or quote others to contradict my interpretation.

The subject of the relation of Islam to democracy would present further difficulties, because democracy seems to have become as undefinable as religion or

love. From the beginning of democracy in any part of the world up to the present times when it almost seems to have taken the place of religion as an ideal or a way of life, opinions about its nature and value have been divergent and contradictory. Western political historians usually start with Greek democracies paying special attention to Athenian democracy as a typical institution. Some lovers of Greek culture praise it as much today as Pericles did when he called it the high watermark of civilisation. But the most famous of the Greek political philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, considered it to be an irrational and disgraceful institution, the last one having the biggest world-conquering monarch as his glorious disciple. Let me quote a sentence from Aristotle's *Politics* (Book V, Ch. 1, Sec. 2). He says: "Democracy arose from men's thinking that if they are equal in any respect, they are equal absolutely." He did not believe in any fundamental equality of mankind. He has asserted that Nature creates some human beings for slavery, and so slavery is a natural institution. The whole of Plato's *Republic* is a monumental and elaborate thesis against Athenian democracy and the whole concept of democracy in general. The teacher and the disciple desired the creation and perpetuation of a rigid caste system in which the majority of superficially free citizens should have nothing to do with the making of laws or the executive government. They too, like Aristotle, considered it just that the majority should consist of virtual or actual slaves. Plutarch says about Lycurgas that to a man who demanded the establishment of democracy in Sparta, he replied: "Go thou and first establish democracy in thy household."

The broadest definition of democracy is that given by Abraham Lincoln, that it is a government *of* the people, *by* the people and *for* the people, which Daniel Webster put in other words as the people's government made for the people, made by the people and answerable to the people. As I have said already, democracy

now has in many ways taken the place of religion ; it is inevitable, therefore, that like religion it should become vague and assume different shapes among different nations due to difference of temperament and history. The British are proud to have developed representative institutions and the British Parliament is considered to be the mother of parliaments. But the Magna Carta which John was forced to sign was not a charter of rights for the people as a political entity did not exist ; it was the landed aristocracy, the feudal barons, who wanted to share power with the king and the right to defend what they believed to be their rights or vested interests ; the people received no protection against the exploitation and tyranny of the feudal lords. The British, during a long process of political evolution, curtailed and ultimately annihilated the power of the king, threatening to behead him if he was too refractory and self-willed, but aristocracy continued to be the actual ruling power till the recent emasculation of the House of Lords where the aristocrats with denuded power and pelf are allowed to debate but not to decide just as the king is allowed to reign but not to rule. A century ago during the time of Macaulay the franchise was still very restricted and the common man wielded no effectual power, but he proudly said : "Our democracy was from an early period the most aristocratic and our aristocracy the most democratic." Like many of Macaulay's verdicts, the assertion is more rhetorical than historical.

How many different and diametrically opposed systems have claimed to be democratic in recent history ? I had an opportunity of discussing the suppression of democracy with Dr Schacht when he was removed by Hitler from the control of finance. At that time he could not dare to denounce the Nazis and, supporting the system, he said that the Jews were suppressed (he did not acknowledge persecution) in the name of German democracy and Hitler was elected by an overwhelming free democratic vote. On the other hand,

Communism claimed to be real democracy run by workers and peasants who have little power in a capitalist regime. The Western democracies collectively have assumed the dignified title of the "free world" implying that the communist world is an enslaved world where the people are equal only in the sense of enjoying the equality of rightlessness. The Italian Fascists also believed themselves to be true democrats wielding power for the glory of the people. France, during the French Revolution, raised the slogan of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, and then Napoleon, the Caesar of Caesars, was the outcome of it. After that, having lost her political hegemony in Europe, France started or intensified her colonial ventures, defeated in many regions by the British, but still holding fast to the rest. Having been defeated, debased and ousted from a part of Indo-China and retaining the rest by the support of the so-called free democracies, France entered on a campaign of genocide in Algeria claiming Algeria to be French because of the exploiting French minority there. This is her practical application of the creed of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality which sounded even better than Abraham Lincoln's "government of the people, *by* the people and *for* the people". The Union of South Africa too is a part of the so-called free world; it took active part in defeating Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism but is actively and violently engaged in preaching and practising the creed of racial segregation and disenfranchisement of the native population and the coloured people within its realm. This too is democracy. Democracy, O Democracy, what crimes are committed in thy name!

Democracy, through its long and chequered history, has assumed many forms and shall in all probability assume many more forms in the future. We have to discuss here democracy in relation to the religion of Islam. Muslims in general believe Islam to be a democratic creed, but it is a curious phenomenon that neither Arabic nor any other Muslim language has any word

that could be called an exact equivalent of the word "democracy". The word *Jamhūriyat* derived from *Jamhūr*, meaning the people, is a twentieth-century translation which is now adopted in many Muslim languages. The Socialist Party in Iran is called Tudeh Party; the original meaning of *tudeh* is a mass or a heap. The movement claiming to be the protagonist of the masses adopted the word *tudeh*, meaning mass. When even the word did not exist the presumption is that democracy as understood in the West existed neither in ideology nor as an institution. Dealing with Islam the question is not difficult to answer. According to the Islamic faith; sovereignty belongs to God and not to the people either as a whole or as a majority. As God is the Creator and the Law-giver of the universe, so all authority in human affairs ultimately vests in God. The phrase "sovereignty of the people" would be considered heretical or blasphemous. Whoever rules among the *Ummah* rules only by delegated authority. The real problem is to whom this sovereignty or authority is delegated. If there were an organised Church in Islam with an hierarchy of ordained priests, this body would claim to be the vicegerent of God on earth as the Catholic Church holds power in the name of Christ with an infallible pontiff at the apex of the ecclesiastical pyramid deriving his infallibility directly from Jesus himself; it is as if Jesus himself were the executive head of the institution. But as original Islam abolished monarchy and feudalism by abolishing primogeniture, so it categorically abolished priesthood. The Prophet handed over the preservation, propagation and implementation of the faith to the entire community of the faithful advising them to choose their leader from among themselves on the basis of all-round fitness, irrespective of tribe, race or wealth. He said; "Follow your leader even if he is a negro with tangled hair."

It should be kept in mind that in this book we are dealing with Islam and not with the types of States

and societies in which Muslims have lived through these fourteen centuries. Islam should not be confused with the social or political organisation of various Muslim communities or nations in different epochs and different climes as Christianity as lived through the ages should not be identified with the original outlook of Jesus or what he desired humanity to be. Islam, as taught in the Qur'ān and preached and practised by the Prophet and a short time afterwards by those on whom his mantel fell, very soon lost its idealism by what may be called a counter revolution. It became diluted with Arab imperialism which spoilt a good deal of its original equalitarian ideology. When wealth undreamt of by the dwellers of the desert poured in, it accumulated in the hands of a minority, all the economic ills and moral weaknesses followed in its wake. From Mu'āwiyah onwards who converted the democratic republic of Islam into a hereditary monarchy, the self-styled successors of the Prophet, assuming the dignified title of Khalifahs, combined in themselves the powers a Caesar and a Pope. The whole wealth of an extensive realm became their private purse. Courtiers and aristocracy sprang up so much so that they began to prefer the accumulation of taxes to the propagation of faith. Revenue collectors reported to an exceptionally pious Khalifah 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azīz, that the revenues of the realm were declining and all was not well with the State exchequer because those who became Muslims did not pay the poll tax. He said that the State should be pleased because it was not the aim of Islam to collect taxes but to propagate the faith. Such a man among the later Khalifahs was an exception; the ruling junta got rid of him by poisoning. Theology with few honourable exceptions became the hand-maiden of monarchical power. Nobody raised the voice against these Caesars who sat in the seat of a Prophet who lived in a mud hut, swept his floor, mended his shoes and milked his goats, living for days together on a handful of dates with or without a cup of camel's milk.

The Prophet has said : "Henceforth there shall be no Caesars and God hates most the man who is called an emperor or king of kings." How could the world believe that there was anything democratic in Islam when the common man had no say in the working of the State and had no power to assert his rights ? Among the people only a nostalgic memory was left of the type of State and society which was brought into being by the implementation of Islam for about three decades. They called this shortlived experiment *Khilāfat Rāshidah*, the rightly-guided Caliphate, implying thereby that the rulers that followed were misguided. The glory of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the magnificence of Sulaimān the Magnificent, and the splendour of Shāh Jahān who sat in the jewelled Peacock Throne, costing half the revenue of his entire kingdom, was not the glory of Islam or the furtherance of its ideology but quite the opposite of it.

Let us summarise the type of State and society which Islam envisaged as an ideal pattern and which it tried to realise within the limitation of an early era, and the beliefs which it was based upon :

(1) Sovereignty belongs to God alone Whose chief attributes are Wisdom, Justice and Love. He desires human beings to assimilate these attributes in their thoughts, words and deeds.

(2) Though ultimately God is the moulder of destinies, He has endowed man with free will so that he may freely attune his will to the will and purpose of God.

(3) In matters of faith, God has compelled nobody to believe ; the ways of righteousness and their opposites have been clearly indicated. Anyone may believe or disbelieve and bear the consequences. There must not be any compulsion, in the matter of faith ; an imposed faith is no faith at all. Everybody should be free to follow his own way of life either because of personal preference or because of his belonging to a community provided his conduct is not subversive of fundamental morality or disruptive of the peace of the realm or does not trespass on the legitimate freedom of others.

(4) An Islamic State is not theocratic but ideological. The rights and duties of its citizens shall be determined by the extent to which they identify themselves with this ideology.

(5) Non-Muslims can live peacefully as citizens of a Muslim realm. They are free not to take part in the defence of the State and in lieu of this exemption pay a poll tax which shall entitle them to complete protection of life, property and liberty in the practice of their faith. If they are prepared to defend the realm as loyal citizens, they shall be exempt from this tax.

(6) There shall be no racial discrimination within a Muslim realm. People become high or low because of their character only.

(7) All avenues of economic exploitation must be blocked, so that wealth does not circulate only in the hands of the few.

(8) A person shall be free to earn as much as he can by legitimate means without exploitation or fraud, but wealth even legitimately acquired beyond a certain minimum shall be subject to a tax on capital. This shall be an inalienable part of a Muslim polity.

(9) Women shall enjoy an independent economic status; all their inherited wealth and their personal earnings shall be their own property which they can dispose of as they please.

(10) A truly Islamic State cannot be a monarchical State; it must be a democratic republic in which the president is elected by a free vote of the community on the basis of his capacity and character.

(11) It is incumbent on the ruler to have a council of advisers and consultants for the purposes of legislation or major decisions. They shall be chosen on the ground of their wisdom, experience and integrity. The mode of their selection is left to circumstances. In matters not pertaining to faith, non-Muslims are not debarred from consultation.

(12) There shall be no special class of priests in an Islamic society though persons leading better religious

life and possessing better knowledge of religious affairs have a legitimate claim to honour. They shall enjoy no special privileges, legal or economic.

(13) There shall be perfect equality of opportunity and equality before law. The law shall make no distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim either in civil or criminal cases. Every citizen shall have the right to seek a judicial decision even against the head of the State. There were many instances of this in early Islam. The Khalifah 'Umar appeared in the Court as a party in a suit and the judge stood up as a matter of respect, at which the Khalifah said that he had started with an unjust act honouring one party more than the other; how could the other party have confidence in his sense of justice?

(14) The judiciary was made independent of the executive. In periods of monarchical absolutism, when the judiciary began to be influenced by the men in power, the great jurist *Imām Abū Hanifah* preferred to be whipped and sent to prison than accept the post of a judge. He was imbued with the original spirit of Islam which desired uncorrupted justice between man and man. "Do not refrain from justice even if it goes against you" (iv. 135); "Let not the hostility of a party tend to make you unjust towards it."

These are the fundamentals of an Islamic constitution that are unalterable. No ruler or no majority possesses any right to tamper with them or alter them. This is eternal Islam rooted in the ideals of a God-centred humanity.

An Islamic democracy could differ in its pattern from some of the modern democracies. It is un-Islamic that parliamentary government should run on a party basis. "My party, right or wrong," is morally as vicious as "My country, right or wrong." Once a haughty imperialist British viceroy of India had the audacity to say in a public utterance that Indians are liars. Chesterton, the famous British author, hearing this, said that the atmosphere in India must be chokingly

false that a party politician like Curzon should feel the stink of it because a party politician's life is based on hypocrisy and falsehood. The chief aim in party politics is not the welfare of the State or the weal of the commonwealth but to strengthen the position of the party or weaken the position of the opponents. When a party gets into power by fair or foul means it very often forgets all the promises and does the very same things against which it raised a hue and cry and accused the opponents. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this system is the French Chamber of Deputies which makes it impossible to have a stable government even for a few months. Every day persons and parties come together or separate to dislodge others ; no division on the basis of principles is involved.

Government of the people and by the people has led logically to adult franchise even in nations where the majority are illiterate and utterly incapable of understanding the complicated economic and political issues of modern life. This kind of political democracy was demanded and furthered by exploiting bourgeoisie in every country who were certain of getting the votes of helpless workers and peasants and dependent women. People must have equality of opportunity and equality before law, but equality before law does not necessarily mean equality of wisdom and capacity to make laws. As Socrates said in Plato's *Republic* it is curious that one would not entrust the work of making shoes to one who has not spent a good part of his life in acquiring this skill, but legislation and political decisions are considered to be safe in the hands of those who do not know the elements of statecraft and are devoid of the knowledge of human nature and human destiny. And how right was Aristotle in observing what we have quoted already that democracy means that if people are equal in some respects, they are equal in all respects !

Surely Islam enjoins that good government must be government by consultation, but the vital question

is : Who are the persons entitled to be consulted and how are they to be chosen ? How could you expect a crowd of illiterate and exploited people to choose properly and freely a person to represent them, solely on the basis of wisdom and integrity ? Could a poor man who has no money for an expensive electioneering campaign ever hope to get into a modern legislature ? The extension of franchise should go hand in hand with the extension of a right type of education and economic freedom of the common man whether he is a wage-earner or a peasant. Even when these conditions are realised representatives should be chosen on the bases of knowledge and integrity, the possession of wealth playing no part in it. Some nations experimented with democracy in the past and many more are experimenting with it in the present. It is not difficult to understand why it has so general an appeal. It appeals to the common man because it appeals to his sense of dignity and self-respect making him feel that, in however a humble way, he too counts. He appreciates the idea that everyone is to count as one and nobody more than one. Kant defined the ethical imperative as meaning that every human being is to be treated as an end in himself and not as a means for the furtherance of ends extraneous to him. Throughout the history of civilisation the majority of individuals in a nation or an empire were treated merely as a means to promote the end of a monarchy or an oligarchy or a plutocracy. The governments of the past were devices for maintaining in perpetuity the place and position of certain privileged classes. The democratic ideal is to devise a machinery for protecting the rights of the people and the ultimate extinction of all privileged classes. A democrat rightly believes that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people and the system of State and society should be such as makes it possible for every human being to achieve whatever worth he is capable of achieving. The democratic idea is a religious idea in so far as its starting point

is the postulate that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain natural rights and for the protection of these natural rights all men are to be treated as equal. The world must be made safe for democracy if humanity as a whole has to develop the eternal intrinsic values of human life, which a theistic religion believes to originate in the nature of God. Implementation of these values may change but in themselves they are eternal. This verse of the Qur'an supports this conviction : "The nature of God, on which He moulded the nature of man ; the laws of God's creation, are inalterable—this is right religion" (xxx. 30).

Again, the democratic ideal may be compared with religion in this respect that like religion so much human perversity and collective egoism of classes and vested interests masquerade in the garb of democracy. Perverse forms of religion have rightly been blamed for the worst types of tyranny. Crusades and unholy wars were waged in the name of God. But all the perversities and aberrations of religion have not made the genuinely religious man despair of it. Theistic religion offers the highest kind of idealism which alone can guarantee the spiritual advance of man making him approximate more and more to the image of God and realise that nature which is rooted in the Divine. Cynics as well as lovers of mankind have looked with horror at some of the things done in the name of democracy. Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, says that a perfect democracy is the most shameless thing in the world, and Benjamin Disraeli called a representative government a fatal drollery. Even a spiritual writer like Emerson looked at perverted democracy as a government of bullies tempered by editors. The Conservative Dean of St Paul, W.R. Inge, who as a good Christian should have believed that Christ established the eternal value of every individual, notes with satisfaction that the democracy of the ballot box has few worshippers any longer except in America. Longfellow called envy the vice of

republics and Bertrand Russell, himself a socialist, has endorsed it by saying that envy is the basis of democracy (*The Conquest of Happiness*, p. 83).

If religious as well as secular thinkers continue to decry democracy, what is the alternative that they propose? Unfortunately, there is no other alternative which on the whole would produce more good than any democratic system. Benevolent monarchy or wise dictatorship that could escape the intoxication of power could achieve beneficial results in a shorter period in comparison with hesitating and slow-footed democracies. But you cannot have a succession of benevolent monarchs to which the history of all monarchies' bears evidence. As to dictatorship, it is always established by ruthless violence and cannot continue without it. The ideal of Socrates and Plato of kings becoming philosophers or philosophers becoming kings is only a pattern in heaven.

The Islamic democratic pattern of a republic of free citizens could not last very long because power-intoxicated Arab imperialism gave it a fatal blow. Imperialism and democracy cannot go together and any alliance between them is superficial, transient and hypocritical. Islam's original vision which the best Muslim minds have never ceased to cherish even under most adverse circumstances was democratic. The Prophet as the recipient of revelation, and as an exemplar in the embodiment of what he taught, had an exalted and privileged position, but he did not consider himself to be above law. He told his beloved daughter that she should bear in mind that if she stole anything she would receive the same dire punishment as any common thief. He never built a palace or even a middle-class house for himself. He identified himself with the poorest citizen of the realm neither eating nor dressing better than the humble folk. He left no material legacy for his family but he possessed nothing; his illustrious saintly successor testified after the death of the Prophet that he had heard him say that the prophets inherit

nothing and nobody inherits anything from them ; they are only entitled to the use of things without any claim to ownership. Jesus had the same attitude towards material goods and considered it a great impediment in spiritual life that a soul should be encumbered with unnecessary wealth. Jesus was perfectly right in his observation that it would be more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. (It is said that a very small window in the city gate through which a person could pass in a bent position with great difficulty was called the eye of the needle because of its extreme narrowness.) Islam is a practical religion, so it does not prescribe for all such a spiritualised ideal existence in which nobody should own anything. This is only the characteristic of those who have reached a very high state which is beyond the common run of humanity. But this ideal condition defines the direction in which the principle of social justice should move. People should not sit on unnecessary wealth, however acquired. The have-nots have a right to share it. Does not all humanitarian socialism tend towards it, not curbing the initiative of earning as much as one can by legitimate motives ? It enjoins to devise a system in which wealth as the life-blood of the social organism should circulate in every part of it ; concentration in any one organ would injure the greedy self-centred organ besides having a deleterious effect on the whole organism. There is a verse in the Qur'an in which a question put to the Prophet is answered in only one pregnant word which sums up the whole ideology of socialism : "They ask you what they should give away (for charity or common welfare) ; tell them they should part with whatever is 'surplus'" (ii. 219). The "surplus" is the answer of the Qur'an. Socialistic States are now devising all possible means to take away these surpluses by heavy progressive taxation amounting almost to confiscation when wealth reaches a very high level, and by death duties. They are moving in the

direction of the Qur'an. The conservative Dean Inge is indignant about it because it would impoverish British aristocracy and make it impossible for them to maintain their magnificent country houses. He calls it the robbing of an innocent minority by a predatory majority of do-nothing have-nots.

Islam could not give an eternally valid chart of the details of execution and implementation but did give in unmistakable terms the fundamentals of a humanitarian democracy. True Islam in action could harbour no privileged classes and would not tolerate any type of hereditary monarchy. The hereditary principle is bad for the State and does not hold good even in the realm of the spirit; even a prophet may have a degenerate son and ignoble progeny. There could be no hereditary apostolic succession. Nobody in the Islamic State would have the audacity to proclaim like Louis the Fourteenth: "I am the State." Islam recognises neither kings nor their Divine right. Feudalism or big landlordism also could not develop in a polity which is truly Islamic. As already stated, the law of primogeniture was the bedrock on which feudalism of castles and serfs was based. The Islamic law of inheritance definitely prohibits it. Even if a person has acquired large tracts of land by legitimate means, which is very seldom, they shall be cut up in small peasant-proprietorships within one or two generations. And if surpluses are heavily taxed, capitalism in the old sense shall have no legs to stand upon.

In an ideal Islamic State there could be no kings, no feudal lords and no capitalists with a plethora of wealth. It will be a society of good middle-class people who are the backbone of every healthy society.

Shall it differ very much from a Communist State of the Russian type? The answer is yes, for the following reasons :

(1) It derives the fundamentals of life from the great spiritual leaders of humanity who taught that the ideals of human life are spiritual and Divine.

(2) It shall not subscribe to the creed of dialectical or historical materialism which for Communism is the only eternal truth, if it believes at all in any eternal truth.

(3) It shall be based on the firm belief in the liberty and dignity of the individual; the State is not an end but a means for promoting the maximum welfare of the individual. As the Qur'an says: "You shall be responsible to God as individuals." The personal and private life of every individual must be secure.

(4) This necessitates absolute freedom of conscience which the Qur'an proclaims to the world in the emphatic injunction that there shall be no compulsion about religious beliefs and practices (ii. 256). No one shall enjoy any privilege or suffer any disability because of belonging to any particular group. There shall be no ruling party enjoying any special privilege or power.

(5) Religious communities shall enjoy the maximum of freedom to the extent that, apart from the general laws of the realm necessary for the common weal, general security and protection of fundamental rights of the individual, they shall have the right to be governed by their personal laws. The Qur'an and the Prophet granted that right to all religious communities which cannot be taken away by any legislation.

There are only two points of agreement between Communism and Islam. Both are against racial discrimination and both desire to do away with economic systems that tend to concentrate wealth in a few hands.

One vital question remains to be answered which arises necessarily out of the relation of Islam to democracy and that is: How far is an Islamic society free to make laws for itself if a comprehensive code is already prescribed?

20

LAW AND ISLAM

Law in Earlier Societies. Aristotle defined man as a political animal, meaning thereby that it is an essential part of his nature to live in a polity or organised society ; he cannot live either as a god in splendid Divine isolation or as an animal engrossed in his individual biological necessities. But within the very nature of man there lurks an inner contradiction which needs to be resolved : he is an anti-social social animal. As someone rather cynically said about the attitude of man towards women : You cannot live with them and you cannot live without them. A pure individual without any social reference is a mere abstraction. If you take away everything that he owes to society, and drop his positive or negative attitudes towards others, he will be left only with a psychical vacuum. Law either definitely formulated and codified or in the shape of custom is an indispensable condition of human existence even in its most primitive stages. At the same time man may also be defined as a religious animal. The primitive man's world was filled with gods and spirits and his customs, having mostly a biological origin or necessitated by the instinct of self-preservation, individual and collective, were determined and regulated by superstitions and magic which formed the sum total of his religion. The connection between custom or law and religion is so deeprooted that even in very advanced stage of civilisation the bond has not been completely severed. Even under Western secularism some of the most vital laws that govern fundamental relations like marriage are rooted in religious beliefs.

The world's earliest codified laws in the code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi who reigned from 2213 to 2080 B.C., although obviously originating in the wisdom and experience and the sense of justice of this great legislator-king, are given as an inspiration from the gods whom he and his people worshipped.

The following is an excerpt from the Preamble :

When Anu, the supreme, the king of Annunaki, and Bel, the Lord of heaven and earth, who fixes the destiny of the universe, had allotted the multitudes of mankind to Merodach, the first-born of Ea, the divine master of Law, they made him great among the Igigi ; they proclaimed his august name in Babylon, exalted in the lands ; they established for him within it an external kingdom, whose foundations, like heaven and earth, shall endure. Then Anu and Bel delighted the flesh of mankind by calling me, the renowned prince, the god-fearing Hammurabi, to establish justice in the earth, to destroy the base and the wicked, and to hold back the strong from oppressing the feeble : to shine like the Sun-God upon the black-headed men, and to illuminate the land.

Hammurabi, the elected shepherd of Bel, am I, dispenser of riches and abundance.

The prudent king favoured of Shamash the powerful . . . guardian king of the city, brother of the god Zamama. . . .

The divine urban king, the wise, the prudent . . . possessor of sceptre and crown, whom the wise Mama has created . . . the pure prince whose prayers are heard by Adad . . . who has instituted pure offerings for Ea and Damgal-nunna, because they have exalted his sovereignty . . . the exalted one who humbles himself before the great gods . . . when Merodach had instituted me governor of men to conduct and to direct Law and Justice I established in the land for the good of the people.

At the end of the code there is an epilogue in which blessings are promised for the kings who rule according to the code and dire curses are pronounced on those who disregard these laws :

The Lord Hammurabi has risen as a true father to his people; the will of Merodach, his god, he has made to be feared. In after days, and for all time, the ruler who is in the land shall observe the words of justice which are written upon my pillar. He shall not alter the law of the land which I have formulated, or the

statutes of the country that I have enacted. If that man needs my words that I have engraved on my pillar, departs not from my laws, alters not my words, changes not my sculptures, then may Shamash make the sceptre of that man to endure as long as I, the king of justice, and to lead his people with justice.

But if that man heed not my words that I have written upon my pillar ; if he has scorned my malediction, nor fear the curse of God ; if he has annulled the law that I have given, or altered my words, or changed my sculptures, or erased my name in order to write his own ; or if from fear of these curses he has commissioned another, then that man, whether he be king, or lord, or viceroy, or a man of any other title, may the great Anu, the father of the gods, who has decreed my reign, extinguish the glory of his throne, may he shatter his sceptre, may he curse his end.

The other great system of laws which was promulgated as a Code of Divine Origin is that which is attributed to Moses. It is now believed by all independent scholars that the well-known narratives of Genesis, such as the two accounts of Creation and the stories of the Flood, are merely excerpts from Babylonian cosmogony and Babylonian mythology. Now the discovery of Hammurabi's Code has made the scholars seriously ponder over the possibility whether the legislation of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament is not also of Babylonian origin. The Jews attributed this legislation to Moses who lived about five centuries later than the Babylonian lawgiver. In the life legend of Moses also the story of a Babylonian monarch, Sargon of Azende, who flourished about 2650 B.C. is almost identically repeated ; he on his birth is said to have been exposed in an ark of bulrushes upon the river Euphrates, whence he was resumed, and grew up to be the ruler of all Babylonia.

Modern scholarship has dissected the Hebrew Pentateuch into several superimposed layers, ranging in date from about the eighth century B.C. to the time of Alexander the Great. Dr Driver, in his book *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1894), has given the details of this dissection, which establish the existence in the so-called

Books of Moses of at least four systems of legislation, in the following order :

- (1) The Book of the Covenant = Exodus, xx-xxiii, 33 (to which is related Exodus, xxxiv, 11-26).
- (2) The Book of Deuteronomy.
- (3) The Law of Holiness = Levit., xvii-xxvi.
- (4) The Priest's Code = the balance of the Mosaic legislation.

I summarise here below the views of Chilperie Edwards who made a comparative study of the Code of Hammurabi and the Pentateuch.

According to him, the Priest's Code is the latest and most important constituent of the Pentateuch. It cannot be earlier than the time of Ezra, while it received additions at even later dates. The Law of Holiness is a distinct code in itself, resembling the two previous codes by opening with sacrificial instructions and closing with a parenetic exhortation. The closest affinities of this stratum of the Pentateuch are with the Prophet Ezekiel, to whose time it probably belongs. Deuteronomy is evidently the "Book of the Law" which Hilkiah, the High Priest of Jerusalem, professed to have found in the Temple in the eighteenth year of Josiah (621 B.C.). The author of Exodus says that it was dictated to Moses by Yahveh himself from the mount of Sinai, to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning. The awe and reverence for this book, however, does not seem to have been shared by the author of Deuteronomy who covers the same ground with alterations and interpolations. The scribes do not seem to have any hesitation in tampering with the texts. (This modern criticism of the texts of the Bible was anticipated by the Qur'an which, affirming the truth of the original revelation of the Israelite prophets, complained that the scribes wrote certain things and palmed them off as revelation of the prophets.)

After making a detailed comparison of the texts of the Pentateuch and the Code of Hammurabi, Edwards has come to the conclusion that the resembl-

ance and parallelism are decisive and the Babylonian Code being much earlier, possibly the Hebrew has borrowed much from the earlier Babylonian. The resemblances are simply overwhelming. Out of thirty-two ordinances in the Book of the Covenant, twenty-one are in accord with the Babylonian Code, most being practically identical, and the others being quite in the Babylonian spirit. The inference, therefore, is that the Hammurabi Code must have been the immediate or remote progenitor of the Hebrew legal system. The compiler of the Book of the Covenant adopted such of the older laws as suited his purpose, and added to them sundry regulations of a ritual character together with general moral precepts. The laws themselves are treated as quite subordinate, and the interest of the compiler centres in theological matters, such as the proper methods of sacrifice and the regulation of the periodic festivals. The Israelites did not preserve all the Babylonian laws; some were inapplicable and

iconoclastic monotheist Abraham whom one may legitimately consider to be the father of all the three creeds. Some Western critics have dubbed Islam as a Christian heresy, but in the same manner it should be allowed to call Christianity a Jewish heresy ; in all probability orthodox Jews view it as such. Two other great religions which emerged out of a long religious development need only be touched here briefly. Brahmanism developed various trends which ran together without any logical harmony. It developed pantheism or acosmism carrying in its bosom ancient polytheism and it preached the unity of all existence and the identity of the *atman* and the *pramatman*, the individual soul and the universal soul, at the same time splitting humanity and almost pulverising it atomically into sects and castes with an injunction to keep them untouchably apart. The Brahmanic laws and customs were codified into *Shastras*, the most influential of them being Manu's codes ; they reflect the socio-political situation with which they deal. The white Aryans despised the coloured races of India. They became conquerors and rulers and put at the top of society the priestly and the military castes relegating the rest of society into two or more lower strata, the process of descent culminating in a large mass of outcastes. These divisions were so rigid and firmly rooted in the religious and cultural consciousness of the Hindus that even during the present century the forces of democracy and secularism have not been able to effect a breach in this citadel. The Indian Constitution and some reformed legislation have attempted to remedy this sorry state of affairs but in actual practice the forces of conservatism are still very strong. A liberal religious Hindu is still in a small minority, that believes in the spiritual side of Hinduism without accepting ancient *Shastras* to be eternal and infallible codes of individual and social conduct.

Buddhism arose as a revolutionary phase in the development of Indian philosophy and religion. It

accepted the acosmism of monistic *Vedanta* and the law of *Karma* as valid in the unreal phenomenal world but repudiated the caste system of the Hindus and the codes of law that were mainly based on it. For Buddhism Ultimate Reality is suprasensual, supravital and suprarational, and the purpose of whatever we call life is to negate itself by the annihilation of all desire and the will to live in order to attain the state of *Nirvana* about which nothing could be said or understood because no category of being applies to it. So long as this phenomenal life continues as an evil necessity men are exhorted to keep away from its activities as far as possible. Those who are caught in this net of illusion are to be pitied ; therefore, love and mercy replaced every other injunction. But it could be only remedial or palliative love : it could not be constructive or creative love because all creation is illusion according to this worldview.

There are some points of affinity between Buddhism and early Christianity, which, according to the Muslim view now adopted by a large number of liberal Christians, was a misinterpretation of the outlook of Jesus. The world-negating and life-annihilating view of Buddhistic metaphysical religion could not be expected to exhort people to build up an ethical or spiritual civilisation. Buddha had renounced family life and Buddhistic ideal man, in imitation of him, was a *bhikshu* (monk), who was engaged in no worldly profession and could not undertake the propagation or amelioration of the human race. Buddha denounced the mortification of the flesh or the spirit as a useless and harmful method of salvation, nor did Jesus preach or practise the horrible practices that the Christian saints down to the end of the medieval ages considered necessary for salvation or purification of the soul. Both religions, Buddhism and Christianity, the former with its ontology and the latter illogically misunderstanding Jesus, adopted asceticism or a negative attitude towards life. The Christians, for three centuries, lived as a despised

and persecuted minority in the Roman Empire; they could not identify themselves with the Roman State; they could not recognise the sanctity or validity of the Roman jurisprudence; they could not worship the Roman Emperor as a god. They were, perforce, compelled to dissociate themselves from the Greco-Roman

ritual or following a law as the rigid priesthood demanded and asked whether he had come to destroy the law, he said that he had not come to destroy but to fulfil it. Violation of the Sabbath was punished with death and most of the normal healthy and innocent activities of human beings were characterised as work and thus incurred the penalty of death. The original spirit of the Sabbath which is quite rational was to keep apart a day in the week ; the usual mundane gain-seeking activities should give way either to rest and recuperation or spiritual meditation or selfless work done for the benefit of others who need it. But Jewish legalism had made it a cruel and irrational thing and Jesus had to protest with one of his wisest utterances, saying that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Laws are devised in the interest of better life, and where they begin to hamper life they must give way to the demands of life for which they were only instruments. Take, for instance, the casuistry and the complicity of the regulations and prohibitions of the Sabbath. It had become an overgrown forest of perplexing mazes and vexing brabbles. In the Priestly Code (Exodus, xxxi, 12-17) it is enjoined upon the people that they keep the Sabbath Day holy : "Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death : for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." Such dire consequences of violation make it necessary to determine very carefully and minutely as to which should be regarded as work. Is feeding the cattle on the Sabbath work or shall it be exempted as a necessary and unavoidable duty ? Is pulling an ox out of a pit work ? How about feeding one's family or nursing the sick ? As the years passed new situations called for additional answers so that by the time of Jesus, the accumulation of detail on the acceptable way of keeping the Sabbath had become bewildering and oppressive. The following passage from the historian Schurer indicates what development of the Law meant at the beginning of the Christian era :

On the whole thirty-nine kinds of work were prohibited but very few are of course anywhere alluded to in the Pentateuch. These thirty-nine prohibited works are : (1) sowing ; (2) ploughing ; (3) reaping ; (4) bindings heaves ; (5) threshing ; (6) winnowing ; (7) cleansing crops ; (8) grinding ; (9) sifting ; (10) kneading ; (11) baking ; (12) shearing wool ; (13) washing ; (14) beating ; (15) dyeing ; (16) spinning ; (17) warping it ; (18) making two cords ; (19) weaving two threads ; (20) separating two threads ; (21) making a knot ; (22) untying a knot ; (23) sewing two stitches ; (24) tearing to sew into stitches ; (25) catching a deer ; (26) killing ; (27) skinning ; (28) salting it ; (29) preparing its skin ; (30) scraping off the hair ; (31) cutting it up ; (32) writing two letters ; (33) blotting out for the purpose of writing two letters ; (34) building ; (35) pulling down ; (36) putting out a fire ; (37) lighting a fire ; (38) beating smooth with a hammer ; (39) carrying from one tenement to another.

Each of these chief enactments again requires further discussions concerning its range and meaning. And here, properly speaking, begins the work of casuistry. We will bring forward just a few of its results. According to Ex. xxxiv, ploughing and reaping were among the forbidden works. But to gather a few ears of corn was already looked upon as reaping. When on one occasion the disciples did this on Sabbath, they were found fault with by the Pharisees, not on account of plucking the ears which was permitted (Deut., 23-26), but because they were guilty of this reaping work on the Sabbath (Math., xii, 1, 2 ; Mark, ii, 23-24 ; Luke, vi, 1, 2). The prohibition of making and untying a knot was much too general to rest satisfied with. It was also necessary to state to what kind of knot this applied and to what it did not.

What was it that made the Jews lay such an extraordinary emphasis on Law ? It was in 537 B.C. that a royal decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, after his successful campaign against Babylon, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland after a long exile. After the Restoration they dreamed of building a new Jerusalem on its ruins. During this period of Restoration various leaders shouldered the burden, but the real work of

rehabilitation occurred under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra. The heroic efforts of the Jewish nation restored the Temple in 516 B.C., and the walls of Jerusalem were built in 444 B.C.

In the post-Exilic period, politically the Jews were reduced to insignificance and so the centre of their energies was shifted from politics to religion. Now, religion was not only one aspect of life but the whole of life; they became essentially a religious community and political relations were determined by religious ideas that were dominant and officially authoritative.

When religion becomes the dominant factor in the life of a community, details of life from birth to death and all kinds of human relations are dictated by institutionalised practices. The most effective way to make certain that religious behaviour and practice shall follow a prescribed course is to develop a body of laws that shall be compulsory for all adherents of the faith. The development of the Law, therefore, became the most distinguishing feature of Judaism. In the five hundred years from the Exile to Christ, Law was the most important factor in the life of the Jewish nation. It is a characteristic of law that it disregards the inner life of an individual and concerns itself only with external acts and observances. This develops legalism which, far from being spiritual and concerned with mental attitudes, falls below even genuine morality. A curious phenomenon comes into existence that externally a man becomes very scrupulous in the prescribed religious conduct and worship without being moral even on the average level. The course of Jewish religion after the Exile followed along the lines laid down by Ezekiel and prophecy of the spiritual type of Deutero-Isaiah did not make much impact upon Hebrew religion and was not fully appreciated before the time of Jesus. In fact, prophecy waned until it almost disappeared in the priestly legalism that came into being. After the Exile and the rebuilding of the Temple there were further additions of the written Law. They are rightly called

the Priestly Code because it is mainly concerned with worship and the functions and status of the priests. The process in the development of legalism was not confined to written Law or Torah. A large body of oral law accumulated which consisted of rulings or application of the written Law to some new and unexpected situations. These rulings and precedents gradually acquired the authority and sanctity of the written Law. After such developments a religion becomes so cumbersome in applications and interpretations that only a special professional class develops who specialises in it. Thus a priestly class becomes necessary and well entrenched. This happened in Hinduism also, and although Islam did away with any professional priesthood the accumulation of Law here also made the juristic theologians pretend to be the privileged class in possession of all that is necessary for religious life, which meant really the whole of life. Among the Jews there grew up professionals called the "Scribes," who were learned in the Law. After the time of Christ the oral material was codified and brought together in written form and called the Mishna, but even in the preceding period, although unwritten, it was a binding authority.

Jesus protested against the burdening of the soul with excessive legalism; but the protest was not emphatic enough to shatter this overgrown and complicated structure. A large part of it needed actually to be razed to the ground so that the liberated human soul may breathe freely. The mission of great prophethood is the liberation of the human soul from chains welded by rigid traditionalism and shackles forged by man himself. Jesus said he had come not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it and whoever violates a jot or tittle of the Law shall go to Hell. But this fulfilment, in order to be effective, needed considerable destruction as Rūmī said that you cannot build a new house on a new plan unless you destroy the old structure. St Paul and others after Jesus did not hesitate to draw the

logical conclusion from the outlook of Jesus with respect to Law as Life. They began to say in open words without mincing matters that the Law was a curse and that the advent of Jesus had superseded it by Love. But Love by itself may be a sufficiently regulative principle among a community of saints, though it is doubtful that even there it could suffice if the saints, ascetics or monks want to live well-regulated lives in a monastery. As we have already stated, during the first three centuries of the Christian era the Christian community without a State required no civil or criminal law. During this period all the laws that they required were those necessary for the organisation of the Church. During these centuries Christianity was a non-legal religion but with the sudden acquisition of political power by conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine it was impossible to continue this indifference to Law. Jesus had given them no laws and had exhorted them to follow the Jewish law add ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~or~~ ^{or}

in the existence of the Unseen and the life hereafter but it is not an other-worldly creed. Ascetic creeds like Buddhism, Brahmanism and early and medieval Christianity had a supramundane outlook and considered this life either as illusory or a dark reality to be shunned. They did not consider it necessary to grapple with the real problems of culture or civilisation, so they tended to adopt a predominantly negative attitude towards life. Nietzsche classified religions into those that say Yes to life or affirm it and those that say No to life and make an attempt to negate it. Of all the great world religions, Islam was categorically emphatic in affirming the reality of all existence and the reality of human life. Religious life as something apart from and antagonistic to human affairs does not exist. According to Islam, religious life is this very life lived with a new attitude. It always envisages an individual as an integral part of society. Its prescribed system of daily prayers is primarily congregational, though individual prayers in isolation are not barred where a person stands alone before his God. Another pillar of institutional Islam is the Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime for whosoever has the physical and financial capacity to undertake it. It is the greatest international gathering where the faithful of all nations and every status meet, dressed and wrapped in a single sheet of simple cloth. The fast for one whole month in the year has also a social reference besides some benefits that it confers on the individual as such. The rich man voluntarily avoids taking food, which he can well afford to enjoy, in order to put himself on a level with the indigent on whom dire poverty sometimes imposes starvation. *Zakat*, the prescribed levy on surplus wealth, is meant mainly to assist the have-nots to fulfil the fundamental needs of life. The Muslim God also is a social God Who is directly and perpetually concerned with human affairs, prescribing ways of living and watching over His creatures to see who fulfils them and who violates

them. Islam is primarily a creed of ethical monotheism. It is not mystical because it lays no emphasis on mysteries; it is not metaphysical in the sense of encouraging speculation about noumenal reality. The God of Islam is a living God living in close association with man, Who, in the words of the Qur'an, is nearer to man than his own jugular vein. A critic of the Qur'an, who was fond of mystical and metaphysical aspects of religion, complained that the Qur'an, like some portions of the Old Testament, is full of fight. It must be acknowledged that it is so because Islam envisaged human life as a battleground of good and evil and the purpose of life is to combat evil in thought, word and deed. The Prophet of Islam was engaged in this struggle all his life and fought the evil that he found around him by wisdom, by love, and when there was no other alternative he did not hesitate to curb violent evil by violence. He is reported to have said : "When you see any evil, remove it with your hands by doing something actively about its eradication ; if you cannot do that somehow, then cry aloud against it in protest ; but if you feel so helpless that you cannot even shout against it, then detest it in your heart—this last alternative is the weakest side of faith."

The writer on Islam in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* called Muhammad the most successful of all the prophets and Carlyle chose him as a hero among all the prophets in his lectures on *Hero and Hero-Worship*. All heroism demands fortitude and fight ; a mere mystic or a philosopher or a sermonising moralist does not become heroic by flights of thought or depth of feeling. In heroism, it is the strength of will more than thought and feeling that counts. In comparison with such a prophet the greatest of philosophers, poets and artists create only evanescent ripples on the stream of human destiny. Islam believes in a disciplined and regulated life ; only by canalising of energies are maximum effects produced. He became the guide, philosopher and friend of those who believed in him and

sought guidance from him in matters great and small. This guidance was either directly revealed to him by the Guiding Spirit of all Existence, about Whom the Qur'ān says that He not only creates but guides not only men but everything in His Creation, or he was himself granted the wisdom to guide.

God prepared him to act as a guide by making him pass through as many phases of human life as are granted to few. Born as a poor posthumous child, he lived his early life as an orphan first protected by his grandfather and then by his uncle. He knew by experience the sad plight of the orphan even when his protectors are kind. He passed many years of his youth as a wage-earner, then as a commercial agent of a well-to-do widow who, impressed by his honesty and wisdom, offered him her hand in marriage. He knew thereby the life of the merchant and had a practical experience of right and wrong dealings. Then he spent about twelve years as a persecuted prophet setting an example of trust in God and belief in the ultimate triumph of Truth which requires only patience and perseverance. In Medina he had an opportunity of organising his followers for peace as well as self-defence against hostile tribes whose animosity was intensified in proportion to the prospects of his success. Now, society had to be organised as a State of which he was the Divinely-commissioned head. Every situation and every aspect of life required laws and regulations, for which there were now two sources—Revelation and his own insight into human affairs. The Qur'ān continued to be revealed with longer or shorter intervals and dealt with situations as they arose or answered the questions put to the Prophet. The Muslim science of law or jurisprudence called *Fiqh*, whose literal meaning is understanding, bases itself on six foundations, on four of which there is almost universal agreement : (1) the Qur'ān (2) the *Sunnah* or the percepts and practices of the Prophet ; (3) *Ijmā'* or consensus ; (4) *Qiyās* or analogical reasoning, and (5) *Istihsān*, expediency or

equity, or common weal, based on general principles of human welfare in matters about which the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are silent or not explicit, and, further, about which analogical reasoning does not work as no consensus is available.

Let us take the Qur'an first which is the fountain-head of the Islamic faith. The Qur'an does not present any elaborate and systematic code of laws ; it does not call itself a book of laws. It characterises itself as the book of wisdom : it is *Kitāb-ul-Hakīm* and not *Kitāb-ul-Aḥkām*. The laws and regulations found in the Qur'an are few and far between. Nor is it a book of any detailed rituals—necessary rituals about Pilgrimage and a few other essential practices are found in the Qur'an but the general attitude of the Qur'an is that it has clearly pronounced ritual to be of a very secondary importance not to be identified with righteousness itself. "It is not righteousness that while offering prayers you turn your face towards the East or the West" (ii. 177). The essence of righteousness is virtuous conduct. For instance, the Qur'an considers the essence of religious life to consist in *Salāt* and *Zakāt*, i.e. prayer and an obligatory tax on surplus wealth, but in both cases, notwithstanding constant exhortation, it prescribes no details. This reflects the wisdom of the Qur'an because, as the Book has itself indicated, the essence of prayer, individual or congregational, does not lie in its external forms but in the sincere devotion with which it is offered. And as to taxation on surpluses anything rigid would have been nullified by changes in the economic situation in different times and different places. Spiritually, prescriptions about inheritance should be of lesser significance, but the Qur'an gives them in great details to determine the share of every heir to avoid rancour and dispute which might disrupt family relationship.

Let us try to pick up some salient points about the nature and function of the law as given in the Qur'an itself.

(1) The Qur'ānic revelation styles itself as law of liberty, an act of mercy vouchsafed by God to mankind in order to soften the rigidities of previous systems of law. It suppresses the austerities and the numerous interdictions imposed on the Jews by the Mosaic law or the accretions and interpolations of the scribes who attributed them to Jehovah and Moses.

(2) The Qur'ān has a positive attitude towards life disapproving the exaggeration of austerity, which weakens the body and suppresses the natural instincts of man. It exhorts the believer to enjoy the good things of life provided he observes the due measure. The Professor of Islamic Laws and Institutions in the University of Rome, who has contributed an admirable article on the subject in the *Legacy of Islam*, has also come to the conclusion that the spirit of Islamic law is allowing as large a latitude in human conduct as is possible within the limits of reason and morality. He says : "We may agree with the Muslim jurists, when they teach that the fundamental rule of law is liberty. . . . God has set a bound to human activity in order to make legitimate liberty possible for all ; without the 'bounds of God' liberty would degenerate into license, destroying the perpetrator himself along with the social fabric. This 'bound' is precisely what is called law which restrains human action within certain limits, forbidding some acts and enjoining others, and thus restraining the primitive liberty of man, so as to make it as beneficial as possible either to the individual or to society." To quote Professor Santillana further : "Whatever their form, these rules tend to the same end and have the same purpose, that is, the public weal [*maslahah*]. Accordingly, law, divine in its origin, human in its subject-matter, has no other end but the welfare of man, even if this end may not at first sight be apparent : for God can do nothing which does not express the wisdom and mercy of which He is the supreme source."

(3) According to the Qur'ān, law has a utilitarian

basis, its main purpose is to promote human values the realisation of which creates inner and outer peace leading to God Who is also called Peace (*Salām*) in the Qur'ān. In the few rules of laws given in the Qur'ān, the fundamentals of jurisprudence are not repeated in every instance. But when once a general basis is formulated and definitely given, it should be applied even in those instances in which the bare law is given without its rationale. For instance, prohibiting alcoholic drinks and gambling, it says that in some cases they might benefit some individuals but they must be shunned in the interest of common weal, their injuries far outweighing their benefits. Law should not take account of individuals; it is the nature of law to have a universal character. When Bentham and Mill desired to promulgate or improve the laws on the basis of utilitarianism, defining it as the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers, they were repeating only what the Qur'ān had laid down as the basis of all legislation that benefits and injuries must be weighed and a course of action allowed or prohibited solely on this basis. In amplifying the law given in the Qur'ān or based on the *Sunnah*, to meet the demands of a growing and complex civilisation, the Muslim jurists kept this principle in view. Imām Abū Hanīfah, in his doctrine of *Istīḥsān*, and Imām Mālik, in his doctrine of *Māṣāliḥ Mursalah*, accepted it as a basis of fresh laws and rulings.

(4) In the matter of law as well as the general outlook on life one finds in the Qur'ān and the corollaries drawn from its basic teachings that man should not sunder what God has joined. This teaching is found in the New Testament as well, and is one of the most pregnant utterances of Jesus. Unfortunately, it received a very narrow and misleading interpretation at the hands of Christian theologians and was taken to be a categorical prohibition of divorce even if a marriage may have turned out to be an irremediable failure. Marriage as a sacrament was believed to have been made in Heaven making its sanctity inviolable, for-

getting that some marriages appear to have been contracted in Hell, or Hell seems to have supervened on them later. The Qur'an has affirmed the duty of man not to sunder what God or Nature has joined almost on the phrase uttered by Jesus but has given it a much wider and more rational interpretation.

Take a few instances in which the Qur'an has applied this doctrine. Some religions and philosophies had sundered God and His creation to such an extent that God in His absolute transcendence had become something like the Neoplatonic One or the *Nirguna Brahman* of *Advaita Vedanta*. In ascetic creeds the flesh and the spirit were believed to be engaged in perpetual hostility so that the fulfilment of the needs of the one required the active suppression of the other; God had become hostile to one part of His own creation, as one of the ascetic mystics said that after creating the world God has never cast even a backward glance towards it. In the Iranian dualistic creed, God and the Devil, Yazdān and Ahriman, are engaged in perpetual strife, each trying to extend his territory and jurisdiction at the cost of the other.

The Qur'an derived the unity of existence and also the unity and solidarity of humanity from its monotheism. If God is the Beginning as well as the End, the Outer as well as the Inner aspect of existence, which metaphysics calls Appearance and Reality, then appearances of opposites in life or in Nature are not rooted in eternal contradictions. Light and Darkness are not two primeval principles but alternations like the day and the night; hence the Qur'an says that the alternation of the day and the night is a Sign of God. I have given the exposition of this Islamic outlook at some length in my book *Islamic Ideology* and would not repeat it here. I propose to restrict this discussion to the question of the relation of Law and Love. All existence is governed by law and the law about every aspect of existence is as abiding as the phase of reality to which it applies. The unalterable laws of Life and

Nature are designated in the Qur'ān as *Sunnat-Allah* or behaviour of God and it is repeatedly said that you shall not find any change or alteration in this. Understanding the abiding nature of eternal laws and moulding one's life according to them is defined as true religion. The second assertion in the Qur'ān is also a univeral proposition and that is that God essentially is Love—*Rahmān* as Creative Love and *Rahīm* as Love exercised in Mercy. Certain attributes of God as given in the Qur'ān are absolute and others are relative. It is only the quality of mercy that God has enjoined on Himself which means that it is eternally an essential part of His nature. But God's Love is not blind ; it cannot be symbolised as a blind Cupid, throwing his darts at random ; it is Enlightened Love. In God, Love and Reason are identified. But Reason is a law-apprehending, law-making and law-abiding faculty ; therefore, life originating in Love must find its manifestation in Law. Human love at a lower level of existence tends to become lawless and human laws tend to become loveless. Love like war is supposed to justify breaking of all laws of morality or decency. This is because in the limitations of human life neither love nor reason is perfect ; in their imperfection they lose their identification with each other. The essential reality is life and, therefore, Law as well as Love are to be judged by the criterion of life. The purpose of life is more life, higher life, better life, augmenting itself intensively as well as extensively. Life in its preservation and evolution creates new laws out of its vital urge. Bergson, the protagonist of Life against Logic, makes the cosmic vital urge creative and evolutionary and in his book on two sources of Morality and Religion identifies it with Love which is the intuitive life of prophets and saints. For him the evolutionary urge is creative ; it does not, however, create according to any prevised laws and plans but laws and patterns emerge out of it as secondary products. A plant does now grow according to the laws of botany, but a science of botany

becomes possible when life has created a plant. It is the same with language which does not develop out of a preconceived grammar but grammatical patterns can be discovered in even the most primitive dialects. The Qur'ān seems to be in accord with this viewpoint, giving priority to Love although not neglecting the necessity and reality of Law. Note the sequence of God's attributes in the opening verses of the Qur'ān about which we have already said something. The verses open with the conception of a beneficent and merciful God Who is the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds that He creates. This perpetual providence or sustenance implies love for what is sustained because one nourishes only that which one loves. Forgiveness is also implied in love because only love can be forgiving. But having emphasised these attributes another attribute of God follows that He is the Lord of the Day of Judgment. He is the Supreme Judge Who first made the laws and then watches life to see whether it is following those laws. Natural laws cannot be violated because material existence is not endowed with free will. The sun and the moon and the stars follow their prescribed courses as determined by the law inherent in their nature, planted by the power that created them. Free will emerges as a novel phenomenon during the course of an emergent evolution. Human life is lived at two levels in quite different dimensions; free will makes man a denizen of two worlds—the world of Necessity and the world of Freedom. In the creation of God only man is to be judged. In the symbolic description in the Qur'ān the rest of creation, when offered this risky gift, shuddered at the idea of its acceptance and were contented to exist in their eternal modes wherein no violation of law is possible. The Qur'ān also depicts spiritual beings as angels who are inherently incapable of defying the will of God ; they perform their functions in absolute obedience. Rationality and free will are two distinguishing characteristics of man, but his rationality can be blurred and his freedom misused, making

him tyrannical and ignorant because of the improper use of these gifts. In the Qur'ānic conception of man, he may rise above the angels or sink below the animals. To the Ideal Man as depicted in the Qur'ān the angels have to submit if he realises his ideal humanity and infinite possibilities, and entire Nature is a field for conquest through knowledge. But when he sinks, he sinks to a level, lowest of the low. His minutest thoughts, feelings and actions are weighed with precision in the sensitive balance planted in his own nature in which, according to the words of the Qur'ān, even atoms of deeds are weighed and his life is determined by the balance of good and evil. Taking into account the predicament in which man is placed no one is expected to be absolutely good and no one could be an embodiment of absolute evil. Even as good a man as Jesus would not attribute absolute goodness to himself. As related in the Gospel, when someone called him good, he, with humility characteristic of a genuinely spiritual man, replied that not he but his Father is good. So was the Holy Prophet of Islam conscious of his shortcomings and constantly praying forgiveness.

God, Who creates out of Love and sustains out of Love, is also a judge of good and evil. Human life in its own interests has to be judged. Constantly sentences are pronounced: some are rewarding and the others are punishing, not on account of vindictiveness, but because of the demands of life itself. Moral laws are real and God is the Legislator as well as the Judge. Love apart from law and reason is an abstraction, and Law, devoid of the foundation of love, would become a tyranny and a burden, hampering life instead of advancing it.

Reverting again to the opening prayer in the Qur'ān. Having asked man to recognise God as the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds, of entire existence in all its variety and gradation, acknowledging Him primarily as Beneficence, Love and Mercy, creating life not as a haphazard phenomenon but regulated by law, in this

aspect God manifests Himself as Legislator and Judge in the natural as well as the moral realm ; it proceeds further to draw a corollary that only such a Being is exclusively worthy of worship and service, and assistance is to be sought ultimately from this Source ; it directs man to pray, not for any particular goods or privileges, but to be guided in this Straight Path which combines Love and Law, following which the blessed ones have attained to Beatitude, and deviation from which has led others to stray and draw upon them the wrath which is the natural result of wrong thinking and wrongdoing.

The Qur'ān points towards two varieties of law—the eternal, the unchangeable and the variable, but identifies the essence of religion with the former. "In the laws of God's creation there is no change ; and this is right religion emerging from the nature of God Himself on which has been moulded the nature of man" (xxx. 30). It points towards the uniformities of physical Nature as a Sign that the Ground of Creation is orderly and the ways of the Lord, called in the Qur'ān the habits of God, are not subject to alteration. There is a definite trend in the Qur'ān to seek God, not where the regularities of Nature appear to have been set aside in an event that appears to be miraculous, but in the common observable and understandable uniformities. In the realm of morals, a new factor enters : the mysterious gift of free will which could go against the divinely-prescribed right course. Man may swerve from the right path but thereby the moral law is not violated. Even when man prefers evil to good, the moral law still holds which consists only in this that good and bad actions shall necessarily be followed by appropriate consequences, some of which may be immediate and others remote, some of them obvious and others concealed from common experience but still unobtrusively operative.

It is an undeniable fact that not only customs and manners but even morals have been undergoing

changes from epoch to epoch and from nation to nation. In this realm there appear to be only subjectivity and relativity. The Sophists of Greece emphasised this aspect of morals drawing from this the conclusion that ethics could have no objective basis. Socrates and Plato spent half a century of philosophical discussion to prove that ethics is rooted in the inalterable nature of human life. Everyone instinctively seeks the good, but some people ignorantly seek it in the wrong direction. Physical science is based on the uniformity and objectivity of Nature, but all superstition is rooted in the misapprehension of the law of cause and effect. Man's subjectivity does not nullify the objectivity of physical Nature. The case is the same with moral law. There has been evolution in man's knowledge of physical Nature as there has been an evolution in man's idea of God. Similarly, there has been evolution in man's moral nature, but it is a reality that has evolved ; there could not be evolution of the unreal. The course of evolution constantly sheds away unrealities as has been so beautifully depicted in the two similes used about natural selection and survival of the fittest as already quoted by us in the discussion of the evolutionary teaching of the Qur'ān.

In the Qur'ānic conception of Reality and Appearance, both of which are conceived as Divine, changes occur in appearances, not in realities ; but the changes are also subject to unchanging laws rooted in reality. Everything changes but the law of change does not change. According to the Qur'ān, revelation has been changing in the matter of laws and regulations of conduct, but it denotes no fickleness or unreliability on the part of the Creator. Laws have been promulgated by revelation and also abrogated by revelation when, due to change of circumstances, they ceased to be helpful for life and their continuance would have thwarted the course of human development. In the words of Jesus, the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. The Qur'ān

exhorts its believers to have faith in the Divine origin of all previous revelations but it also teaches that laws have been changing. In the words of Lord Tennyson, which echo this view of Islam, "Old order changeth yielding place to new, and God fulfils himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world." The Qur'anic verse about this is as follows: "We abrogate not a verse unless We replace it with something similar," meaning thereby something not the same in all respects but having a similar object or purpose. "God negates as well as affirms," but changing revelations are in accordance with the abiding Source Book which the Qur'an designates as the "Mother of Books" (xiii. 39). This is the eternally abiding Divine consciousness, the Divine knowledge of the Laws of Being and Becoming, according to which changing manifestations take place. Ancient philosophies in the East and the West stigmatised the world of change as unreal, a cosmic *Maya* or illusion identified with dark matter or *Avidya* (ignorance) which can afford no knowledge of the Eternally Real. The Qur'an considers all existence to be real because it is the creation or manifestation of the Eternally Real. Hegel has endorsed this worldview by enunciating the formula that the Real is rational and in the dialectic of history it is the Absolute that is unfolding itself constantly promulgating and abrogating and advancing life by the synthesis of opposites. It follows from this that no system of laws could be eternal. To quote Tennyson again, these systems have their day and then cease to be:

They are but broken lights of Thee
And Thou O Lord art more than they.

Human history has created and transcended so many systems of laws, some believed to have a direct Divine origin and others the creation of the human sense of rationality and social justice, which properly directed is also Divine. All systems set a seal of eter-

nity on themselves and for long periods held sway as unchanging realities, having systemised human relations once for all. Hindu *Shastras*, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, the proverbially unchanging laws of the Medes and the Persians and the Pentateuch were believed to be Divine and eternal, but no modern State or society considers them now to be sacrosanct. The Romans who had a genius for lawmaking believed to have offered the world a perfect code. They were all good in their own times but changing circumstances have abrogated a major part of them, some of them having been scraped altogether.

We have already indicated the attitude of Jesus and Christianity towards Law. Jesus said that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses but to fulfil it. Jesus was not a legislating prophet ; his main function and mission was to turn humanity towards the spirit more than the letter of the law. That is probably what he meant by fulfilling the law. Soon after him Christianity disburdened itself of the cumbersome corpus of almost the entire Jewish law. But when Christian Church became powerful and Christianity became a State religion, laws were required both for religious and for secular life. The State legislated for its own necessities and the Church developed Canon Law; there was clash of jurisdictions which has not disappeared after the conflict of centuries even in predominantly secular Christian States.

Islam did not believe in this dichotomy of jurisdictions. Life had to be regulated as an indivisible organic whole ; therefore, it never developed a Church with a hierarchy of priests. Its system was neither theocratic nor secular in the Western Christian sense. In the Islamic system, law originates in religion and every law is given either as a part of religion or has to justify itself on the basis of the fundamentals of Islam. In the present-day Muslim Law, some laws are derived directly from the Qur'anic injunctions, others are based on the teaching and practice of the Prophet and

a much larger portion is the elaboration and amplification of eminent jurists of the early centuries of Islam. Religion, morality and legality are all integrated in one mass. Submission to law is a social as well as a religious duty. Infringement of law is a violation of the will of God, because it is a principle inherent in the Islamic conception that rights and duties ultimately originate in the will of God and there is no right in which God has not a share. Jurisprudence is rooted ultimately in theology.

But how much of Muslim Law is to be taken as eternally valid and how much is subject to alteration if the changing circumstances demand it. Being rooted in theology Muslim Law is rigid. Could a Muslim make a distinction between the spirit and the letter of the law and alter the law in conformity with the spirit if circumstances demand it ? Are the applications and implementations of a principle as binding as the principle itself ? Are rituals as important as the spirit that they are supposed to embody in external observances ? In answer to these vital questions the ways of rigid orthodoxy and Muslim liberalism part. Essential Islam is based on the Qur'an but the Qur'an cannot be called a book of laws. The civil and criminal laws given in the Qur'an are not numerous ; in comparison with the whole body of Muslim Law they are only fragments. The Qur'an professes to be a complete teaching for the essential and abiding aspects of life ; therefore, it is legitimate to believe that what is not prescribed in the Qur'an is a variable element. Even if the Prophet gave some rulings and directions, they may have been related to the situations with which he was dealing. If they were meant to be valid for all times irrespective of circumstances, they should have formed part of the Qur'anic revelation, otherwise it shall have to be accepted as an incomplete book which no Muslim is prepared to hold.

A large body of orthodox Muslims believe that even during the two decades that the Qur'an was revealed,

changes in situations and circumstances caused some of the injunctions to be abrogated and replaced by others that would suit the circumstances better. There are others who do not think that anything in the Qur'ān is abrogated ; what is considered to be substitution is only an amplification of what was given before as a simpler injunction. The orthodoxy that believes in abrogation even during the short period of the prophetic revelation should consistently hold the belief that circumstances alter laws even according to revelation, but it does not apply this principle after the finalisation of a direction given in the Qur'ān. Not resting here, it extends the belief about finality still further. Whatever is derived from the precepts or

but are critical about its trustworthy transmission. They consider it to be a historical or biographical record in which a lot of objectionable matter has been interpolated and needs thorough sifting to separate the grain from the chaff. Besides, in the majority of cases a matter is related in the words of the narrator and maybe he has narrated it as he had understood it. Laws demand precision and nobody claims precision in the statements of *Hadīth* literature. But even if a ruling is believed to have originated in the Prophet he was giving it not as an eternally valid revelation but something that met a particular situation.

(4) Those who consider the rulings and interpretations of the *Imān* they accept as authority in legal matters to be unconditionally binding on the followers.

(5) Those who consider it allowable to choose from among the rulings of those orthodox jurists whom they believe to be preferable as conforming more to the dictates of Islam or more reasonable. This kind of legal eclecticism is gaining ground among less rigid theologians in many Muslim countries.

(6) The *Shī'ahs* who form a majority only in Iran and are found in small numbers in almost all Muslim countries believe in apostolic succession, and follow their own ancient *Imāms* on whatever their authority is available; for the day-to-day rulings they have to accept the verdict of their *Mujtahids* who are authorised to interpret or amplify the law as new situations and new needs arise.

(7) In recent history the Kemalist Turks have taken an unorthodox and daring step in the creation of a secular State in imitation of European models. They call themselves 'the Protestants of Islam' who have cut themselves away from all theological authority in the matter of legislation. Their contention is that law, even if associated with religion, is no inalienable part of it. The early laws of Islam were meant to regulate a society and a State which do not exist now. Social, economic and political structures have changed beyond

recognition and that which suited the conditions of Arabian or early Islamic society has become inapplicable to modern life. As the Roman Catholic Church believes that renouncing the authority of the Church is tantamount to the renunciation of Christianity, so Muslim orthodoxy censured the modern Turks as having gone out of the pale of Islam. But the Turk protests that he is as good a Muslim as any other believer in the unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad and he believes the fundamentals of Islam to be true religion, but laws promulgated in a particular epoch are no essential and eternal part of Islam. They pray and fast and go on Pilgrimage as the other Muslims do but consider themselves free with respect to legislation. In their secularism they do not think it necessary to connect their new laws with their religious beliefs. They respect the slogan of Individualistic Protestantism that religion is a matter of conscience and is a personal affair—an outlook which cannot be endorsed even by the most liberal Muslims elsewhere. During the last one hundred years in Turkey, systematic attempts were made to bring in new laws or modify the old ones by a liberal interpretation of classical juristic principles in the light of changed circumstances, but these attempts ceased with the advent of a secularist Turkey.

The general Muslim belief is that Islam gave the Muslims a comprehensive and perfect code of private and public behaviour and gave them the necessary laws for all times. They quote the Qur'anic verse in support of this belief: "This day your religion has been perfected for you." It all depends on what one understands by religion. Religion; according to the Qur'an itself, is an eternal and unchanging reality; this eternal religion based on unchanging laws of existence was also the religion of Abraham, Moses and Jesus and all the numerous monotheistic prophets, mentioned or unmentioned in the Qur'an. Their religion too was perfect although they promulgated or followed different laws.

It follows logically that this variable element in religion could not be that which the Qur'ān calls Islam. The contention of rigid orthodoxy is that God revealed and changed laws when human societies were in a less advanced stage and with the finality of the prophethood of Muḥammad and the last and final Qur'ānic revelation unchanging laws were finally given for the whole of humanity. But this contention is untenable both from the point of view of the Qur'ān and the attitude of the Prophet himself. He was conscious of the fact that no code could be comprehensive enough to cover the infinitely varying situations of life, and he did not want humanity to be burdened with too many rigid laws. While he was sending Mu'ādh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen he asked him by what law he would decide the cases. Mu'ādh replied, "According to the directions in the Qur'ān." The Prophet asked him further: "What would you do if there is no Qur'ānic injunction about it?" On this Mu'ādh replied that he would then follow the precedent of the Prophet himself. "But how would you proceed if the situation is so novel that neither the Qur'ān has envisaged it nor have I ever encountered it?" asked the Prophet. Mu'ādh replied that he would then follow his own conscience or good sense. The Prophet approved of it and blessed him.

All the later Muslim jurists have followed this advice of the Prophet. When they found anything definite in the Qur'ān they accepted it as authoritative; after this if they could get hold of something said or done by the Prophet and believed it to be authentic and truly transmitted, they would not add or subtract anything from it; but with respect to that for which there was no positive or negative injunction they exercised their free judgment within the boundaries of the spirit of Islam. They did a good job and formulated principles that could make Muslim jurisprudence as one of the most liberal systems. I have already quoted Professor Santillana of the University of Rome as an impartial European authority on Muslim law. He says: "Consider-

ing its spirits, therefore, we see that the tendency of Islamic Law is to allow human action the widest limits, and we may agree with the Muslim jurists, when they teach that the fundamental rule of law is liberty."

Compare the scanty legislation in the Qur'ān with the other cumbersome codes of legalistic religions. The few laws given are also characterised by elasticity. Prayer in solitude or congregation is essential but no form is prescribed. It is not essential to pray in a mosque, as the Prophet said that one of the distinguishing characteristics of our religion is that the entire earth has been made a mosque for us; temples and synagogues are not a necessity though they may be convenient places for congregations. Similarly, a privileged class of priests is not recognised as an institution indispensable for worship. Islam has no sacraments; even marriage is a civil contract. While praying, if one finds standing physically inconvenient, one may sit down even while the others are standing. If due to some physical inability even the sitting posture is painful one may lie down. Turning one's face towards the central mosque of Mecca as a historical nucleus and geographical focus of Islam is recommended for its psychological and sociological advantages, but the Qur'ān has said in so many words that turning your face in this or that direction is not the essence of righteousness. This is Qur'ān's attitude towards all rituals. Fasting is prescribed for one month in a year, but it is not compulsory for the old and the sick and the traveller or others who are genuinely unable to stand it, because of the nature of their duties whether in war or in peace. They may observe it on other days when their physical fitness or circumstances allow, or feed the poor instead. *Zakāt* or compulsory charity is prescribed only for those who have surpluses, but the Qur'ān has not gone into details because details would not suit all types of economic circumstances. Pilgrimage is prescribed only for those who could conveniently do it. This is the spirit of the Qur'ānic laws

and injunctions given in various verses.

God desires to create conveniences and not prescribe hardships for you (ii. 185).

God prescribes no duty for a soul which is beyond its capacity (ii. 233).

O God, spare us the burdens with which the former nations were burdened (ii. 286).

We will make the way of good smooth for you (lxxxvii. 8).

We have made the Qur'an easy to remember, but is there anyone to take it? (liv. 17, 22).

O Prophet, We have made this revelation in your tongue easy for you (xix. 97).

We have made this Qur'an easy in your tongue so that they (those addressed) may understand and follow (xliv. 58).

O Prophet, We will make the way easy for you (lxxx. 20).

The Prayer of Moses: My Lord, open up my breast (enlighten my consciousness) and make my affair easy for me (xx. 25-26).

Recite from the Qur'an whatever you find easy (lxxiii. 20).

Religion is convenience (a saying of the Prophet).

Many more verses of identical import could be quoted from the Qur'an to show that, according to this revelation, the purpose of religion is not to create obstacles and hurdles for man but to show that the way of righteousness is fundamentally aimed at well-being. The good may have to struggle for its realisation and triumph, but there is more inherent torture in the life of evil. The ease that evil seeks is illusory and short-lived but the peace of mind sought through good life is more real. The Qur'an is not oblivious of the fact that a person trying to lead a good life and actively struggling against the forces of evil has to suffer hunger, pain, loss of worldly good and has to be prepared for all types of supreme sacrifices. The life of the struggling Prophet and his Companions who spent more than a decade of living martyrdom is a witness to this eternal fact. The Prophet is reported to have said that it is the prophets who suffer the greatest persecution in this life. These sufferings are inevitable, but why add to them self-imposed mortification like the pathological ascetics who were revered by all the great religions

before and contemporaneous with Islam ? Why make spirituality equivalent to the violent suppression of natural instincts which could benefit neither oneself nor others? Why dichotomise life into religious and mundane spheres? Why burden the soul with unnecessary ritualism? Why create a class of priests and monks and religious mendicants who burden others with their maintenance? Why have a Sabbath in which good and harmless labour even for the benefit of others is tabooed, exposing the doer of good to death penalty? Why make laws which do not take account of circumstances in which their violation may be necessary for the preservation of life and for social welfare? Why make divorce unlawful even when the lives of the partners are being wrecked and frustrated by extreme incompatibility and conflict? Why make a fetish even of monogamy when in extraordinary circumstances it is preferable to give the status of a legal wife to another woman giving her an honourable status than keeping her as a mistress attaching the stigma of illegitimacy on innocent children, the victims of an illicit relation?

Hostile critics of Islam could find no reason for the rapid success and propagation of Islam than the use of the sword. There could be no greater calumny than this unjust charge against a religion which by revelation announced to the world that there must not be any compulsion in the matter of religion, and whose Prophet and his immediate Successors granted charters of religious liberty to Christians which could be studied by any scholar as authentic documents of early Islam. If Islam had resorted to violence, eight centuries of political dominance in Spain and four centuries of Turkish rule in Eastern Europe would not have left a single non-Muslim there. A Turkish Sultan once proposed this un-Islamic act but the theologians themselves thwarted him by pointing out that Islam as revealed in the Qur'an does not allow it. As a result of this Islamic Ideology the Muslims remained a small minority in both wings of Europe and having lost military

strength were either forcibly converted or driven out. Similarly, about seven centuries of political dominance in India left them as a small minority even in the seats of their government. Those who attribute the spread of Islam to the sword should look to the Continent of Africa, partitioned among Western Christian Powers in the nineteenth century. Extensive Christian missionary activities accompanied or followed this political annexation and economic exploitation. Thousands of missionaries rushed to the explored and unexplored regions of this vast continent offering educational and medical facilities and economic uplift to the savages and the heathen. As compared with these advantages and privileges the scattered Muslims had nothing to offer except a simple faith which had no enigmatic dogmas and mysteries; they had no church and no organised missions. They offered to the heathen only belief in One Merciful Creator and Sustainer of the universe Whose unity should be reflected in the unity and solidarity of humanity. They practised more than preached the brotherhood of man which recognises no racial superiority and special privileges because of the pigment of the skin. The result has been that the concerted missionary zeal of all the Western nations has not achieved one-tenth of the success of Islam. These picters of Islam with the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other should honestly ponder over this phenomenon and dive into the real causes that attract to Islam civilised as well as uncivilised races and individuals. Sir Thomas Arnold's book on *The Preaching of Islam* would tell them how Islam spread in the world. In India, the tyranny of the Hindu caste system drove millions of the lower-caste people to join a brotherhood with social equality.

Islam was a movement of all-round liberation from the very beginning. Its outlook and its laws were humane and simple and its theistic creed without mystical and metaphysical subtleties was easy to grasp, and socially its global brotherhood is genuine. Toynbee,

the great British historian, has said that racialism is the most deadly poison in the body of the Christian West from which Islam is completely free ; Islam has solved this problem more successfully than any other religion or culture.

We revert again to the principle of liberty as the foundation of Muslim jurisprudence. In the Islamic Law the list of prohibitions is very small. and even about these the law is not very strict, and the general principle holds good about all prohibitions that necessity makes lawful what is forbidden. Normally one must not eat a dead animal: still it would be worse to die of hunger. Al-Ghazālī applied this principle to the toleration of absolute monarchies when the political ideal of Islam as a democratic republic became a practical impossibility. He asks, under the existing circumstances, which is to be preferred: anarchy and the stoppage of social life for the lack of a properly constituted authority, or acknowledgment of the existing power, whatever it be? Of these two alternatives the jurist cannot but choose the latter. Islam is a practical religion ; in the words of Renan, it is a religion for human beings. It does not content itself with presenting only the ideal. The nature of every ideal is such that it cannot be completely actualised in any single embodiment, but actualities of life must perpetually move towards this ever-receding and ever-beckoning goal. Islam takes note of human predicaments and provides for meeting diverse situations. It is uncompromising only in its ideals and resilient about their partial and incomplete fulfilment. The Muslim is justified in believing that the *Shari'ah* or the way indicated in the Qur'an and illustrated by the life of the Prophet has a finality about it. But the finality is the finality of the principle and the spirit and not its implementation in a particular form in a particular epoch or a particular situation which may not recur. I heard the sage of modern Islam, the Philosopher-Poet Iqbal, summing up his view of Islam in the words : "Islam is an

aspiration and is not to be completely identified with its fulfilment in a particular epoch in a particular shape." Life is a Creative Urge that perpetually creates the forms and perpetually transcends them. He said that the worship of forms is idolatry and Islam basically is iconoclastic.

To understand Islam and the foundations of its jurisprudence one must find out its trends. It put the feet of humanity on the Right Path to walk on which the Muslim prays for Divine assistance at least five times during the day and the night. These trends are the essence of the *Shari'ah* which he believes to be final. The Prophet himself was conscious of the fact that due to the limitations of the community he was trying to guide and reform he could not do many things that he would have liked to accomplish. He said he would have liked to remodel the architecture of the Ka'bah, but he hesitated because of the deep-rooted memorial sentiment of the Arabs associated with its present structure which was likely to receive a shock. One could guess that there must have been many more steps of reform in various directions of life which he could not take because his contemporaneous humanity was not yet ripe for it.

Let us take as an example the institution of slavery. Almost the entire structure of the civilised as well as the uncivilised world was bound up with this institution which deprived a large portion of humanity of a moral or civil status. No religion, no law, no culture ever thought of abolishing it. Great thinkers like Aristotle considered it to be an incarnation of Divine reason, held it to be a natural institution because, according to them, Nature created quite a large number of human beings to serve as slaves. The democracy of Athens was a government of free men for free men ; it was not a government of the people, for the people and by the people, because three-fourth of the population was slaves. The Romans having a special genius for jurisprudence never contemplated abolishing this curse of

humanity. The slaves were treated as chattels and the masters enjoyed a legal right of life and death over them.

What did Islam do about it? It could not abolish it at a stroke. It gave injunctions to mitigate its rigour along with directions that would gradually abolish it altogether. It took away the master's right of life and death over his slave and made maltreatment also punishable. It made the emancipation of a slave a great act of merit. For a large number of major and minor sins the emancipation of a slave was made an expiation, an atonement and a judicially imposed fine. The Prophet allowed his followers to retain their slaves only on the explicit condition that they were fed and clothed like their masters. This was given as an ideal for the relation of master and servant towards which some socialistic societies have moved in modern times. Following the Islamic trend the great successor of the Prophet, the Khalifah 'Umar, issued two orders successively; first, that no Muslim shall be enslaved and, second, that no Arab shall be enslaved. He would certainly have proceeded further given another few years, but by the irony of fate a Persian slave resident in Medina assassinated him. Who knows that a group of vested interests may have instigated him. Counter revolutionary forces were not extinct. The capitalists, the slave-owners, the corrupt officials suppressed by the prestige of the Prophet and the might of 'Umar later on managed to poison another pious Khalifah, the namesake of the former 'Umar because he had attempted to bring back the Muslims to the original Islam from which they were deviating. Muslim governments forgot that the programme of Islam was to do away practically with slavery altogether and 'Umar had enjoined that a part of the *Zakāt* tax was to be spent on the emancipation of slaves.

Did Islam accomplish nothing in this respect? Surely Muslim law and society raised the status of the slave to unprecedented heights. In a Muslim household

you could not easily distinguish the slave from the master. The slaves became teachers of free men, jurists, ministers and commanders-in-chief of armies. They were allowed to advance till they became founders of monarchical dynasties. There flourished a Slave Dynasty in India and the Mamlūks of Egypt were descended from slaves as their very name denotes. The mighty Maḥmūd of Ghaznī had a similar origin and his favourite minister Ayāz was a slave. When one talks of slaves in Islam one must not forget that it was not the same thing as found elsewhere down to the nineteenth century.

There is quite a substantial part of Islamic Law dealing with the regulation of the institution of slavery. It would be ridiculous to say that slavery was meant to remain an abiding part of the Islamic *Shari'ah* so that no part of Islamic Law should be abrogated for lack of an institution that it was meant to regulate. With the abolition of slavery, made possible in the modern economic structure of civilised nations, one object of Islam is fulfilled. When the free wage-earner and the free servant also get better and equalitarian human treatment, another part of Islam will be fulfilled. Who could distinguish the domestic servant of the Prophet from the master in any essential respect? The Prophet said: "Assist your servants in their tasks." He swept his own floor and milked his own goat and mended his own shoes and considered no work beneath him. He set an example in this respect for what is now called dignity of labour. Labour can be dignified only if dignified people are prepared to engage in all kinds of labour. Laws are meant to regulate certain situations: if the situation changes, the law must change; if an institution is negated by the dialectic of history, the law regulating it becomes a dead letter. It may happen to many another law and many another institution.

European Orientalists almost uniformly state their opinion that enclosed within a rigid frame of dogma

the system of Islamic Law cannot be reduced to the formulae of Western jurisprudence. The dogma being invariable the laws based on it must be quite incapable of development. There is a confusion here which must be removed. In the first place Islam is almost free of what the Western mind understands by a dogma. The basis of entire Islam is its uncompromising monotheism ; but is monotheism a dogma ? It would be better to call it a view of life, its origin and its goal. The Qur'an is full of evidences and arguments and what it calls the "Signs" of God pointing to a refined and beneficent Creator. The second essential belief is that God reveals Himself not only generally in His creation but also specially to certain gifted souls called the prophets, and Muhammad was the last of them. Has not history justified this belief ? Islam is the last great religion founded on prophethood. Here and there prophets continue to emerge and gather a small following claiming nothing that was not already revealed in its essentials to former prophets. Many of them bring in good, bad or indifferent variations or accretions of little importance. They create new religious groups more or less segregated on the basis of inessential dogmatic differences. None of them attains the stature of an Abraham, a Moses, a Zoroaster or a Jesus or a Buddha or a Rama or a Krishna believed to be incarnations. None of these small prophets becomes a revolutionary force changing the entire outlook on life of those who profess and practise it. History has justified Muhammad in his assertion that that phase of prophethood terminated with him because the fundamental truths have been given or clarified once for all. After him, he said, the function of prophethood shall be shared by men of learning who will be like the Israelite prophets the majority of whom were moral and social reformers inviting people to be religiously pure in spirit and socially just. So, according to Muhammad himself, one aspect of prophethood is finished, but the other aspect must continue

for the revival of faith in God and social justice.

If belief in God is a dogma it is shared by all theistic religions. And is there any spiritual religion that does not accept it as an essential fact that some gifted souls are in closer communion with the Universal Soul in which Reality, Truth, Love and Justice are rooted and Who is a Creator and Preserver of values which are human and Divine at the same time? These are the facts of life unless one takes God and communion with Him to be a widespread illusion. Outside these beliefs Islam has nothing that could be called a dogma. There is no doubt that Islam has laid down the foundation of a comprehensive system indicating directions and trends for all the essential aspects of life, but within the framework of its ideals it is an open system. If it were a closed system from the very beginning, all Islamic Law could have been enclosed within half a dozen pages of the Qur'ān, but we have seen that the Qur'ān gives very few laws and very little ritual, removing the rigidity of laws by latitudes and permissions to suit various circumstances and pronouncing ritual to be a secondary affair and variable in varying situations. The Qur'ān was supplemented by the rulings and practices of the Prophet. If he had meant to eternalise them he would have ordered them to be meticulously and scrupulously recorded as a code for all times but neither he nor his immediate Successors ever thought of doing it. There are very few traditions or sayings of the Prophet related by his close associates and co-builders of the Islamic system like his two immediate Successors, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. 'Umar was mortally afraid of collecting and relating them lest they replace the Qur'ān or supplement it in a doubtful manner. He threatened to punish Abū Hurairah, the most prolific of *Hadīth* narrators. When a Governor appointed by him was leaving to take charge of one of the provinces he escorted him on foot to a long distance and then said that he wanted to give him an important advice.

“You are going to a people who constantly recite the Qur’ān and you hear them like the buzzing of the bees. Don’t confuse them by relating too many sayings and doings of the Prophet.” He wanted the Muslims to concentrate on the Qur’ān which was sufficient for the essentials of their faith and the way of life prescribed for them. It was about two centuries after the Prophet that some scholars dared or thought it necessary to collect them. By this time it had happened what the great ‘Umar, a man of extraordinary vision, had feared. These assiduous collectors gathered thousands of them and rejected the large mass for lack of proof of authenticity and retained only a small number which, according to their lights, stood the test of historical criticism. We bow respectfully to their piety, integrity and assiduity but cannot accept the infallibility of their judgment, from which subjective factors and their personal limitations could not be thoroughly eliminated. After them these collections gathered a sanctity of almost revealed truth. As a source of Islamic Law they stand only next to the Qur’ān. Their importance reached such a degree of exaggeration that, instead of being tested on the criterion of the Qur’ān, some of them were believed to have superseded some injunctions of the Qur’ān, as, according to them, the Qur’ān itself had abrogated some of its own injunctions. They based this on the belief that the Revelation granted to the Prophet was not confined to the Qur’ān. If it were so, how curious it is that the Prophet himself, who is commanded by God to deliver to humanity whatever is revealed to him along with the assurance that this Revelation is guaranteed by God to be preserved and not run the risk of alteration or addition at the hands of the scribes as had happened in the case of all previous revelations, should have neglected his extra-Qur’ānic revelation and left it to the gropings of biographical research scholars to be sifted two centuries after him out of a mass of mostly unreliable material transmitted through the

shifty medium of verbal transmissions running the gauntlet of eight generations.

Surely these traditionist research scholars have done a very valuable and necessary piece of work, but it must remain open to any scholar to sift and criticise this transmission again with better and more objective historical information, mostly keeping the Qur'an as the most reliable and stable criterion. Even if some ruling or practice or precept is trusted to have been tolerably reliably reported, the question remains whether it was meant to meet a particular situation or was valid as an eternally unalterable law. If it is something that is to be taken as universally valid for ever irrespective of circumstances, it should have been a part of the Qur'anic Revelation which claims to be a perfect and comprehensive book for eternal verities and human relations.

The position of the Prophet was such that every advice given by him was not only accepted unconditionally by those who sought it but also tended to be accepted as a verdict valid for his followers for all times. He did not want to burden his *Ummah* with an ever-increasing burden of laws. He is reported to have said with a measure of righteous indignation: "Don't put unnecessary questions to me, because my position is such that any answer given by me shall be taken as binding for my followers for all times to come, thereby curtailing the liberties of people in matters in which God has left them free to judge for themselves. He is a tyranniser over humanity who puts to me unnecessary questions instead of exercising his own honest free judgment."

The different juristic sects in Islam have arisen on the basis of accepting or rejecting or neglecting or interpreting various sayings and doings of the Prophet, which means that in dependence on *Hadīth* a Muslim does not stand on the terra firma of incontrovertible injunctions. Take for instance the systems of land tenure which are so vital in agrarian civilisations.

The founders of four orthodox schools of Muslim Law have moved in opposite directions in this respect. One would allow share-cropping and the other would consider it unlawful; one would allow cash rents, the other would not. There are others who say owning more land than one could cultivate without hired labour was disapproved by the Prophet. Some find justification for the nationalisation of land and others have no objection to big landlordism, almost feudal in character. All of these conflicting schools of thought fortify themselves on the most vital economic problem on the basis of *Hadīth*. The Qur'ān does not deal with land tenure and rightly so because the teaching meant for all times and all climes could not enjoin any one system in preference to other actual or possible systems. The agrarian problem becomes different in different countries. In a newly opened continent of virgin soil like U.S.A., Canada, or Australia in the opening stages, unlimited land could be had free for whosoever could cultivate it; there was no pressure of population on land. Where there is enormous pressure of teeming millions on limited areas of cultivable land the problem becomes utterly different. Any solution in one case would be irrelevant in the other case. If the law of inheritance pulverising a piece of land is applied rigidly, cultivable land is very soon fragmented into uneconomic holdings. Any reference to conflicting *Hadīths* or *Kitāb al-Kharāj* compiled by Imām Abū Yūsuf, the eminent jurist of the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, could not serve as a practical guide. The Qur'ān says that land belongs to God and God is used in Muslim jurisprudence as equivalent to and guardian of common weal and social justice. In another verse it is said that benefits of land are meant for all who require them. God is substituted in the Muslim concept for the old idea of *civitas* in Roman jurisprudence.

All dynamic societies are perpetually engaged in the reconstruction of their laws; the laws get petrified only when society becomes static or fossilised. There

have been roughly almost six centuries of Muslim dynamism, among which the legal codes took shape by the end of the fourth century. There was a constant effort at interpretation and amplification. Disciples freely differed from their teachers and none of them claimed infallibility. They formulated excellent principles of legislation which would make it a living and growing reality constantly adapting itself to new and unexpected situations. The principle of *Ijtihād*, which means applying one's judgment to matters on which God and His Prophet have left the men of knowledge free to judge, was a universally accepted tenet.

Qiyās or analogical reasoning to make new laws was accepted by the most eminent school of jurists, the Hanafi school. They were accused by their opponents of opening the door to individual caprice because reasoning could lead the people in opposite directions as is the case in philosophical thinking. But when society became static or decadent, the followers of this very school became diehards in the matter of law; proclaiming the belief, which reflected their own intellectual impotence, that the world now cannot produce legal geniuses like the great Imāms, therefore henceforth up to the Doomsday only commentators shall be allowed who shall originate nothing. Thereby these inert followers put these juristic systems practically on a par with the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. The other liberal principle of *Istihsān* whose nearest Western equivalent is Equity was approved in various degrees by Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik. It is derived from the root *hasan* which means goodness as well as beauty. The Mālikīs define it as "turning towards expediency and justice". Imām Shāfi'i was apprehensive about accepting this principle and the reasons were the same as advanced against *Qiyās* or analogical reasoning that every judgment based on equity would be the opinion of an individual judge which could not be binding on others. This fear could have been mitigated or eliminated if Muslim States had developed a parliamentary

system or a council of jurists to come to an agreement about law of equity and iron out individual differences by free discussion. The principle of consensus as a source of law is found in all books of Muslim jurisprudence as a valid principle, but no Muslim State ever attempted to give it a practical shape. Consensus of truly representative people, respected for their integrity, learning and experience, deliberating on the basis of the fundamentals of the Qur'ān and the actualities of a given situations, using the principles of analogical reasoning and broad considerations of equity and expediency could have continued the original dynamism of Islam wherein even fixed laws could again be thrown into the melting pot to meet unexpected and unprecedented situations. It would not have been a violation of the foundations of the Islamic *Shari'ah* because the Qur'ān itself has prescribed the exercise of rational judgment both for the knowledge of reality and the moulding of human life. Believers are "those who listen to all that is said and choose that which appears to be the best" (Qur'ān, xxxix. 18). And about consensus the Prophet said that the agreement of a whole community of believers cannot be wrong, and whatever the Muslim community considers good for itself is good also in the sight of God.

Islam without being a theocracy in the sense in which the West uses this word insisted on the common foundation of religion, morality and law. In Islamic society law cannot be secular in the sense that it should renounce any connection with religion. For a Muslim religion is an all-comprehensive reality. Personal morality, social relationship, private law, public law, inter-faith or international relations must be justified or referred back to the fundamentals of Islam. This connection may be explicit or implicit; it may accord with definite texts or may be derived from its basic principles. If Islam had been only metaphysical and left human relations to be determined by churches or priests or if it were poor in content confining itself

to mere moral exhortations or religious dogmas, rituals and sacraments, it would not be different from many another creed which confined itself mostly to metaphysical beliefs or ultra-rational mysteries. Inculcating belief in the Unseen as a postulate of religion in the very first lines of the Qur'ān, in actual practice it dealt mostly with the life that human beings have to live in this world of sensible phenomena. The Qur'ān enjoins the Muslim to pray for well-being right here in this world as the partial fulfilment of human destiny in preparation for a still greater fulfilment in the life hereafter. The Prophet said: "He who is blind here shall be blind in the hereafter." The Prophet of Islam was granted opportunities to deal with all aspects of life and set an example of the actualisation of ideals to the extent that it was possible within the limitations of circumstances. He was himself once a wage-earner and, therefore, announced to the world a maxim that the wage-earner is a friend of God. He kissed the hand of a labourer gnarled by hard labour. He would not allow the believers to indulge in long-prayers to the neglect of what were called worldly duties by ascetic religions which had separated spirituality from the demands of normal human nature. He prescribed religious practices removing all rigour from them and making a full life lived in this world with a spiritual attitude a religious life. He entered this life as a posthumous child and spent his childhood as an orphan. In later life when he could have well afforded to live a life of affluence he preferred voluntary poverty living like the poorest of the poor, going several days without a square meal. He was not an ascetic; he adopted simple living to nourish his energies for higher tasks. His simplicity reduced his physical needs releasing his energies for the stupendous task of creating an all-round revolution in human affairs. His example witnessed to the world that the head of a State must not assume the privileges and prerogatives of kingship. When he walked in the company of others he would not keep a single pace ahead

of them. From his dress no one could distinguish him from others. He asked for no wages. The world is now making democracy into a religion, and for many it has become almost a substitute for it. But has the world seen a better democrat than him exemplifying healthy equalitarian trends. He owned no property and said, as reported by his friend and first Successor Abū Bakr, that the Prophets have only the use of things and not their ownership ; they inherit nothing and none inherits from them. On his death-bed he asked if there was any money in his mud-hut and when told that there were a few coins still left there he ordered that they must be given away in charity immediately : "I do not want to face my Lord as having hoarded anything." Those who say that the creed of Muhammad is outworn and left behind by the advancement of humanity should answer this question, whether they could conceive of any democratic republic better than the one that he tried to bring into being, in which the head of the State lives the life of a poor citizen and is as much subject to the law as anyone else. He said to his daughter : "Law is no respecter of persons ; as the daughter of the Prophet you are not exempt from anything. If you steal anything you will be dealt with by law as a common thief." Who could be a greater democrat or a greater equalitarian than him who emphasised it as a basic principle that a healthy society must be a classless society without racial cleavages or divisions based on the inequality of wealth ? Fearing that the Arabs may feel intoxicated by power that the success of Islam brought about, he warned them by his famous utterance that an Arab as such has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab as such is superior to the Arab. "You are all the descendants of Adam and Adam was made of clay." The Qur'ān emphasises the unity and solidarity of humanity by pointing towards the common origin of all human beings, men and women, black and white, high and low. Men must be judged according to their characters and

not the pigment of their skins or the length of their purses. Now-a-days it is held almost as an axiom that all politics is basically economics, and there is a good deal of truth in this assertion. The Qur'an laid the foundation for all healthy economic systems, by two fundamental principles which should govern all planning and reconstruction. The first principle is that even in freely and legitimately created wealth all surpluses must revert to the purposes of general amelioration and common weal; the second principle is that economic planning must see to it that wealth does not circulate in a few hands. According to these principles, Islam tried to block all avenues of exploitation that existed in the epoch. There was a capital levy on surplus wealth, and extravagance in expenditure was

nent Muslim jurists. From the point of view of implementation of these precepts Muslims may have much to learn from other nations who, as a result of experimentation and conflicts particularly during the last few centuries, have discovered ways and means of embodying these principles in laws and constitutions, but so far as the basic ideas and trends are concerned they have to go back to original Islam to find them embodied in its foundations. The superstructures raised on these foundations reflect partly the mental, social and political level and exigencies, but the implementation in a particular epoch proposed by a jurist and accepted by his school of thought could not be accepted as an eternal and abiding part of a religion which is believed to be valid for all times and for all nations.

Western writers diagnosing the present all-round backwardness of Muslim societies and States often come to the conclusion that Islam's theocratic system which does not sunder the functions and jurisdictions of the Church and the State is responsible for this stagnation and they advise the Muslims to follow in the wake of the West to cut asunder what the God of Islam and His Prophet had joined. Their advice is based on their own history and faith. They do not see that Islam sanctions no such institutions as the Church, and an Islamic State, completely disregarding the foundations of Islam, cannot be envisaged as a consistent entity. Certainly the Muslims have their theologians, but they are not vested with any authority. What the Muslims want is not any segregation of the Church and the State but enlightened and liberal interpreters of Islam who should be able to derive out of the basic principles of Islam any progressive adaptations or additions which socio-political changes and altered economic structures demand. The Muslims are suffering now from that very disease from which Christendom suffered right up to the end of the Medieval Ages when even scientific hypothesis and established scientific facts had to be accepted or rejected on

the criterion of biblical texts. The message of Jesus was interpreted by a conservative and reactionary Church and individual believers were more tightly in the grip of theocracy than the Muslims have ever been. A wrong view of Christianity created inquisitions and every nonconformist was in the danger of being burnt alive as a heretic. There have been a few cases in Muslim history in which some thinker or jurist was persecuted by his fanatical opponents. Muslim history is free from the institution of inquisition and religious wars which caused such havoc in Christendom after the rise of Protestantism. Wars among Muslim nations were waged for the lust of conquest by rulers or military adventurers. It was a Europe, utterly sick and disgusted, caused by wars and persecutions in the name of religion, that made the human thinkers demand the complete segregation of the Church from the State. The Muslims in every country have their reactionary and obscurantist theologians, but they are not a well-knit organised body wielding any real power, and no Muslim government at present is run by a set of theologians, not even Pakistan that has declared itself an Islamic Republic and embodied it in the Constitution that every such legislation shall be *ultra vires* that is considered by the Muslims to be un-Islamic. All theologians are not reactionary and, therefore, the reactionary views of some individuals or groups can be counteracted by progressive liberals, who are not secularists in the Western sense but believe that the tenets of Islam liberally interpreted can cope with all problems and make State and society develop in healthy directions. Islam envisages all human life and, one could say, all existence as one indivisible unity emerging from the unity of its Creator and Sustainer. Unreligious or a-religious secularism cannot be accepted by any community or nation that professes Islam. Moral, legal and economic principles must derive their authority from fundamental religious beliefs about the destiny of man. It was a Christianity

divorced from the spirit of Jesus that allowed Christian nations to promulgate and practise ridiculous and tyrannical laws before the rise of modern rationalism. Take for instance some of the British laws which have governed a Christian society for long centuries and have been reformed only in modern times. Some laws about marriage and divorce were thoroughly irrational ; some of them have been reformed and others shall have to wait for long before they are scraped by the development of rationality and justice. Islam made marriage a civil contract in which the parties could impose conditions not repugnant to the fundamentals of religion and morals. Christianity, making marriage a sacrament, disallowed divorce under any circumstances, thereby causing incalculable hardship in many cases. Even now when it is allowed it is hedged in by irrational conditions, to fulfil which lawyers suggest subterfuges and evasions and the parties are compelled to resort to patent falsehoods and hypocrisies, and how much linen has to be made dirty in court to secure a judicial decision. Then it was not very long time ago that a married woman ceased to have any independent economic status the moment she was led to the altar. All her assets passed to the husband, and it was a principle of British law that in law husband and wife are one person and that one person is the husband. Islam, thirteen centuries before, had granted her independent economic status. She received a prescribed share in inheritance, a sister receiving half of the share of the brother because he was duty bound to be a supporter of the family out of his possessions and earnings, while the woman kept all to herself what she received or earned. We hear now-a-days a maxim which is universally accepted that there is no real liberty without economic liberty ; Islam had envisaged it long ago and, therefore, strengthened the rights and status of the woman by making her economically independent, still retaining the duty of the man to support her. Instead of her wealth passing to the husband because of wedlock, it was the husband

who was enjoined to part with a portion of his wealth. *Mehr* or *Sadaqah* mistranslated as bride-price was really meant to give her some status and economic security. The Muslim law is so strict about the fulfilment of this obligation that out of the assets of a deceased husband no heir and no creditor can receive anything before the unpaid *Mehr* is paid to the widow. If the marital debt was so large that after this payment nothing is left for other heirs or creditors, they shall have no legal right to claim anything.

To give one more instance of laws getting divorced from the spirit of a spiritual religion, take the British penal law about theft that was repealed only about a century ago because of its unspeakable cruelty. According to this law, anyone, child or adult, convicted of theft of even as small a sum as one guinea received capital punishment ; every thief was hanged. This was the law of a Christian nation which listened to the Sermon on the Mount in their churches in which the Prince of Love and Peace had enjoined his follower to hand over even his shirt to one who had taken away his coat instead of handing him over to law to be stoned or hanged.

The hostile Western critic of Islam criticises Islamic Law from two contradictory viewpoints. Some Islamic laws are denounced on the basis of their laxity and others on the basis of their rigour or cruelty. For instance, they would say that the Qur'anic injunctions are very lax about murder because the murderer can be let off if the kinsfolk or heirs of the murdered person are prepared to accept compensation instead of insisting on life for life. Then turning to another penal injunction they would say Islam is cruel because it prescribes that a thief's hand should be cut. We will deal with the penal law of Islam in another place, but we cannot help remarking here that this accusation ill befits the mouths of those whose Christian ancestors for centuries were hanging even children for small thefts. We do not accuse the religion of Jesus for all these irrationalities

and cruelties because Jesus was a rational man who could not have tolerated the sacrifice of human life to cruel laws. He was averse to stoning to death even one who was caught in adultery ; how would he have looked at a society worshipping him and hanging children for small thefts at the same time ? Every cruelty is the result of a deviation from a spiritual religion.

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The Author

Khalifah Abdul Hakim was one of the leading intellectuals of the Indo-Pak sub-continent, and devoted the last ten years of his life to the exposition of Islam, especially in relation to contemporary problems. He came from a Kashmiri family settled in Lahore, where he was born in 1894. After a distinguished educational career he joined the staff of the newly opened Osmania University (of Hyderabad, Deccan) in 1919. Later, he went on study leave to Europe and obtained his Ph.D. from the Heidelberg University on the basis of his thesis, *Metaphysics of Rumi*. This study, when published, was acclaimed as the best account of the philosophy of Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi. Khalifah Abdul Hakim became the head of the Philosophy Department of Osmania University after his return from Europe and held this appointment till 1943 when his services were borrowed by Kashmir Government, first as Principal of Srinagar College and later as Director of Education. In 1947, he returned to Hyderabad, as Dean of Arts Faculty, and retired in 1949. During his spell of service in Kashmir, Khalifah Sahib was greatly fascinated by the land of his ancestors, and decided to settle there; Fate, however, interfered with his plans, and, after retirement, he had to settle down at Lahore. In Pakistan began a new phase of his life-and probably the most fruitful one. Here, in 1950, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Institute of Islamic Culture at Lahore and directed its affairs till his death in 1959. Not less important was the fact that he found time to write a number of books, which bear testimony to his deep study of Muslim thought. Amongst his works, *Islamic Ideology* is perhaps the best known, but he also wrote a number of books of a high standard in Urdu, e.g. *Afskar-i-Ghalib*, *Fikr-i-Iqbal*, *Hikmat-i-Rumi*.



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